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CANADIAN Cycling MAGAZINE

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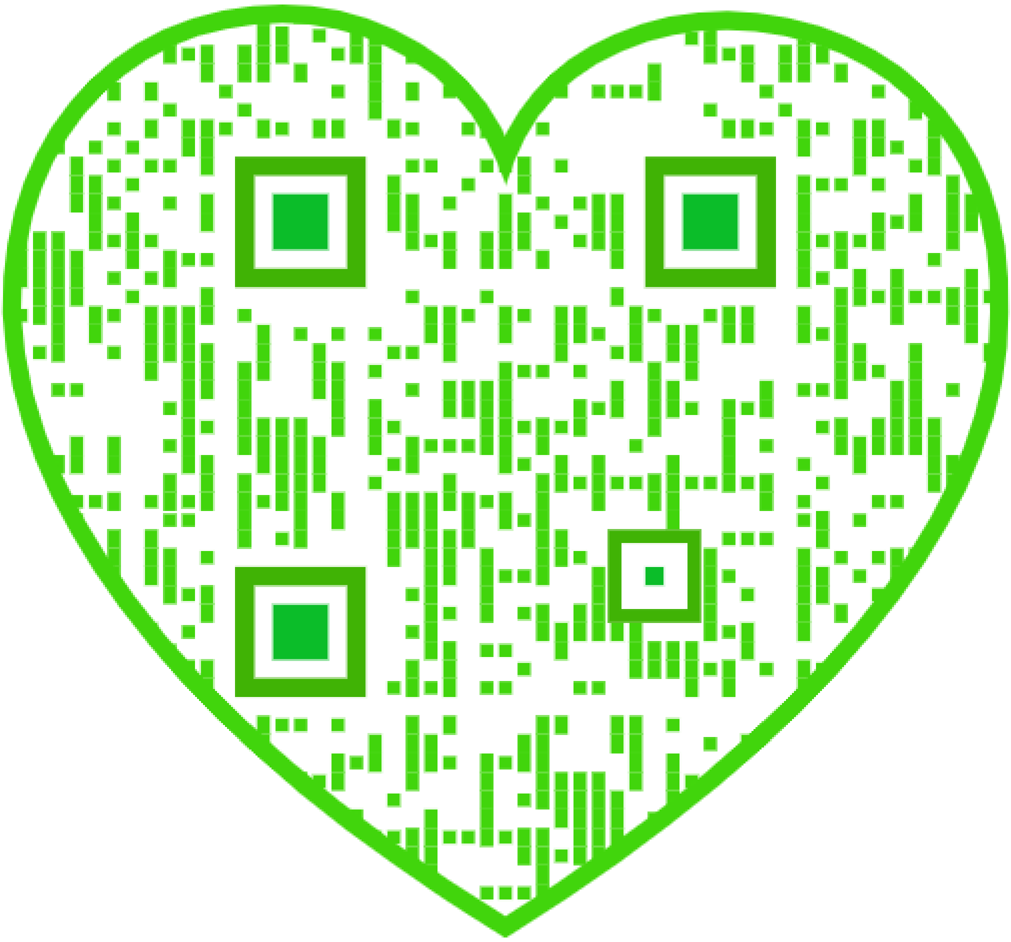

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Photo: Dave Silver

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ON THE COVER

Adrian Hansen rides a 2025 Argon 18 **Sum Pro** road bike (*argon18.com*) with SRAM **Red** drivetrain and Zipp **454 NSW** wheels. He's kitted out in clothing by Rapha (*rapha.cc*), including the **Pro Team long-sleeve midweight jersey**, **Pro Team insulated gilet** and **Pro Team winter tights**. What you can't see is the Rapha **lightweight base layer** boosting Hansen's warmth during his late-season ride. Rapha's **Pro Team lace-up shoes** are on the rider's feet. Providing protection are the Scott **Cadence Plus** aero helmet (*scott-sports.com*) and Giant **Helio** sunglasses (*giant-bicycles.com*).

Photo: Matt Stetson

Rebalancing Bikes and Booze

My evolving relationship with two pursuits that are at odds with one another

I remember when I was told straight up that any alcohol was just no good for me. That feels like an absurd thing to write because it seems so obvious now. Yet, in 2016, as I worked on a story about cycling's other favourite legal drug, coffee, I also asked a dietician and researcher about the idea of red wine's possible health benefits for the heart. Her response was unequivocal. "Ethanol is toxic. It's something the body has to break down to get rid of," she said. When the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) announced its new, stricter guidelines in 2023, I wasn't surprised. They make complete sense to me, even if I continue to find those recommendations a challenge.

You see, mixing cocktails is one of my off-bike hobbies. Some friends and I share recipes, and we happily shake, stir or build these concoctions for one another. At parties and family gatherings, I like to make sure adults have fancy glasses with high-octane liquids in their hands. Like the running inventory of bike parts I keep in my head, there's also a mental ledger for the contents of my liquor cabinet. Right now, I have more tire sealant than green chartreuse. If I were to adhere to the CCSA's weekly guideline of a maximum of two standard drinks to avoid alcohol-related issues—probably—then getting together with friends for drinks would really mean getting together for a drink. One standard drink is the equivalent of 1.5 oz. of hard liquor. The ingredients of a Toronto cocktail, one of my fall favourites (2 oz. rye, ¼ oz. Fernet Branca, ¼ oz. simple syrup, but I like to substitute maple syrup, two dashes of bitters) don't leave room for a second serving.

Well before the CCSA released its guidelines, I was in Boulder, Colo., on a cycling-related press trip. After the day's ride, my hosts set out all the drinks we cyclists could have wanted: pop, water, wine and beer. But among those bottles and cans was another liquid: non-alcoholic beer. For me, it was one of the first instances of NA beer being an out-front option on the drinks menu at a junket. It seemed I was a late-comer to the rising trend of NA drinks. After I changed out of my kit, I grabbed the near beer. I had the wine at dinner.

> *"Right now, I have more tire sealant than green chartreuse."*

I've heard from riders using biosensors who say they can watch heart-rate figures get worse after just one drink. I don't need any fancy devices to tell me that the day following a cocktail night, my on-bike fitness is terrible. Ultimately, I must admit, my two hobbies are not complementary.

All of these facets were in the mix when Mel Chambers pitched me her story on alcohol and cycling ("Past the Bottle," p.22). It's an engaging and detailed look at the connections between the toxin and the sport. The article comes at the right time for me as I'm re-evaluating my relationship with booze—and just ahead of the holidays. Like a climb up an alpine pass, this will be a challenge.

Matthew Pioro
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Georgia Astle mid-flight, on her way to second place at Red Bull Rampage

Red Bull
RAMPAGE

How a knee injury launched a cycling career

The evening before Jonas Walton took to the start line of the Grand Prix Cycliste de Québec for the first time, he sat in the lobby of the hotel where all the WorldTeams were based. Riders and support staff appeared to have the run of the place. The Canadian national team—which gives up-and-coming athletes like Walton a chance to race with the world's top roadies—was staying there, too.

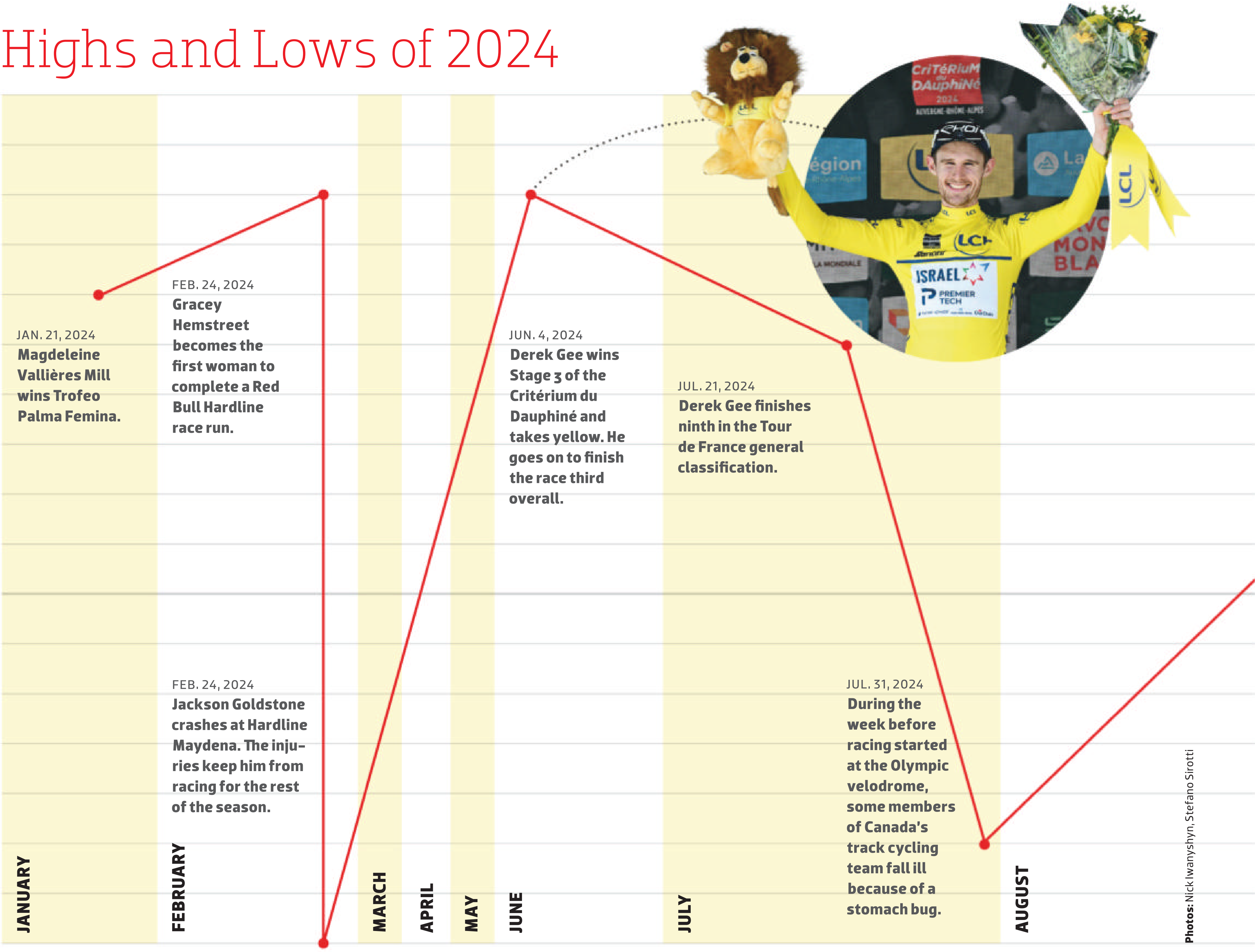
Even though Walton is the son of Brian Walton, a Canadian cycling hall of famer, and Dana Walton, a rider who's won multiple masters world championships, cycling wasn't Jonas's first sport. "I never planned on starting cycling," he said. "I ran track. I did a little bit of wrestling. Then, at 16, I got a bad knee injury through track and field. That stopped everything. I went to three doctors, and they all told me the same thing: I could either do cycling or swimming."

"So after being told my whole life that I should be riding a bike, I was eventually forced to do it," Walton joked. "The knee injury was actually one of the best things that ever happened to me because I found out that I love cycling way more than anything I'd ever started." Some of his successes include the 2024 under-23 national time trial championship and the youth classification at the Tour of the Gila.

The day of the Quebec City race, Walton got into the breakaway with a group that included his teammate Félix Hamel. The happy accident Walton suffered almost five years ago seemed to have led him to a new cycling milestone.

Jonas Walton at the Grand Prix Cycliste de Québec

Highs and Lows of 2024



JAN. 21, 2024
Magdeleine Vallières Mill wins Trofeo Palma Femina.

FEB. 24, 2024
Gracey Hemstreet becomes the first woman to complete a Red Bull Hardline race run.

FEB. 24, 2024
Jackson Goldstone crashes at Hardline Maydena. The injuries keep him from racing for the rest of the season.

JUN. 4, 2024
Derek Gee wins Stage 3 of the Critérium du Dauphiné and takes yellow. He goes on to finish the race third overall.

JUL. 21, 2024
Derek Gee finishes ninth in the Tour de France general classification.

JUL. 31, 2024
During the week before racing started at the Olympic velodrome, some members of Canada's track cycling team fall ill because of a stomach bug.

Photos: Nick Iwanyshyn, Stefano Sirotti

A climber tackles the time trial

Even though Nadia Gontova's time trialling has been improving, her second-place at September's Chrono Féminin de Gatineau was a surprise. Gontova is a natural climber: the longer the climb, the better. After the 2023 season, she felt her time trial abilities needed work. Throughout 2024, she'd alternate her focus in TTs, sometimes prioritizing an aerodynamic position, and other times, focusing on power.

In April, at the Redlands Bicycle Classic, the rider on DNA Pro Cycling wanted to win a climbing stage as she'd done the year before. There was also some discussion about riding for general classification, but the team wasn't sure if Gontova had enough experience. "The plan was more to try to win Stage 2, and then see if I could have a good TT." Gontova's Stage 2 win put her to the top of the GC and her 11th place in the following day's time trial kept her in the race lead, which she held to the final day.

At the Chrono Féminin de Gatineau, Gontova didn't expect the time trial course, with its twists and turns, to suit her. "My goal for the day was just to finish feeling happy with how I did," Gontova said. "The result wasn't something I was thinking about too much. So when I finished, and they told me I was second, I was so surprised. With all those WorldTour riders there, I definitely was not expecting that."

In 2025, Gontova will ride with Winspace, a French team. She's set to face more climbs and time trials on the roads of Europe.

Chasing records on a penny farthing

On July 21, 2023, at the Jerry Baker Memorial Velodrome just east of Seattle, Lizanne Wilmot set the hour record for the farthest distance covered on a penny farthing by a female rider: 23.41 km. The rider from Brampton, Ont., made the record attempt during the Vision Grand Prix, which was two days of track racing that she was also part of. "I did an hour on the penny farthing, then I could barely walk. An hour and a half later, I raced a keirin," she said.

After the event, it took some time for Wilmot—who works as a spatial data scientist in Sydney, Australia—to get her full application into Guinness World Records. Everything became official late this past August. In October, as she was making plans to tackle the speed and kilo benchmarks for a penny farthing in late December, her hour record fell in London, England. Melissa Eisdell covered 26.199 km.

"As a sprinter, I doubt I would do the hour again," Wilmot said. "I did what I set out to do. I was first in the record books, and I've inspired others to have a crack. But, I'm mildly competitive. The distance set might be in my grasp if I do some endurance training. Did I mention I also want to Everest the penny sometime next year?"—*Matthew Pioro*

AUG. 30, 2024
Isabella Holmgren becomes the under-23 women's cross country short track world champion. Ava Holgren is third, and Emilly Johnston comes in fouth.

AUG. 30, 2024
Rafaelle Carrier takes silver in the junior women's XCO world championship race.

AUG. 31, 2024
Mel Pemble sets a world record in the women's C3 500-m time trial.

Photos: Tim Foster, Bartek Wolinski/ RedBull Content Pool

SEPTEMBER

SEP. 1, 2024
Isabella Holmgren becomes the under-23 women's XCO world champion. Emilly Johnston is third in the championship race.

SEP. 4, 2024
Canadian paracyclists snag four medals at the Paralympic Games.

SEP. 7, 2024
Jenn Jackson wins the national marathon mountain bike championship race, taking her third national title of the year. She became the XCO and XCC champ in July.

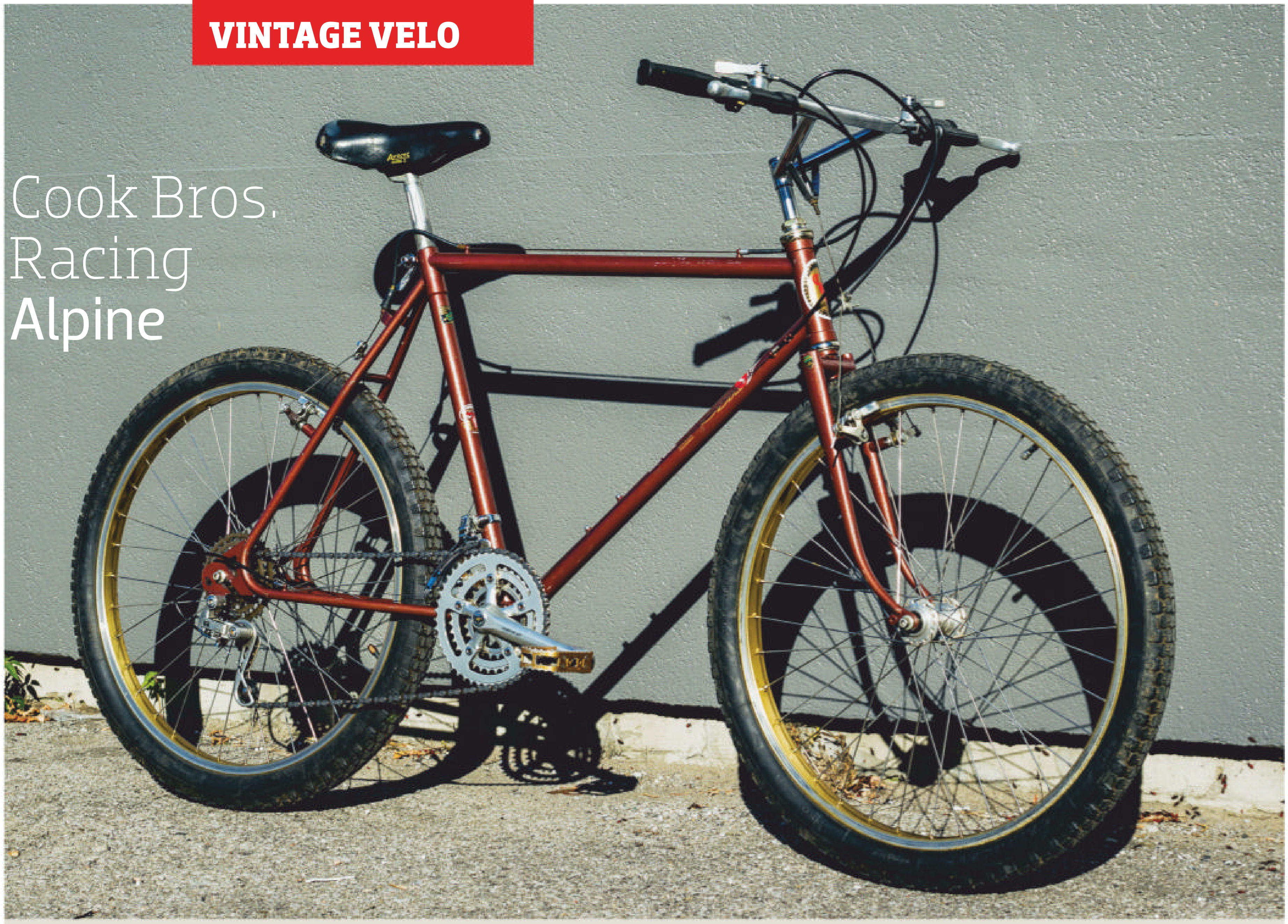
SEP. 24, 2024
Nathan Clement defends his world title in the T1 men's individual time trial in Zürich, Switzerland.

OCTOBER

OCT. 10, 2024
Georgia Astle is second and Casey Brown is third at the first women's Red Bull Rampage.

OCT. 12, 2024
Brandon Semenuk wins Red Bull Rampage for a record fifth time.

Cook Bros. Racing Alpine



COOK BROS. RACING

In 1972, **Gary and Craig Cook** began designing BMX bikes and parts. Two years later, Cook Bros. Racing was officially on the market. Since the brothers had a passion for race cars and backgrounds in engineering, they brought an understanding of materials and manufacturing processes largely absent in the BMX community at the time. By using aircraft steel and aluminum in an industry that was making bikes out of steel pipes similar to those used for plumbing, the materials-handling alone transformed the way bikes were made. They accomplished what very few other companies were able to achieve through their in-house manufacturing.

The Alpine first appeared in 1980. It was offered as a frameset with fork, Mafac brakes, a Cook Bros. Racing press-fit bottom bracket, and Terry Cable brake cables and lever hoods. The frame uses 4130 chromoly straight-gauge tubing. The fork is built with Reynolds 531 blades (made in England for tandem bikes) with a custom Cook Bros. Racing crown, which could accommodate the widest tires of the time.

There were fewer than 40 frames produced, although depending on who you talk to, that number could be much less than 30. Currently, I am aware of the existence of seven Alpines, at least two of them without serial numbers. Like all things produced by Gary and Craig Cook, they have become highly collectible.

This Alpine is #04 and is in outstanding condition. It has all near-mint condition original parts, paint and decals. It has a set of Cook Bros. Racing Alpine hubs laced to 2.125" Ukai gold rims. The rear derailleur was changed to a Shimano M700, in contrast to the Suntour Mountech that was available at the time.

Cove Cycles in Vancouver first sold this bike. Apparently, the owner, Chaz Romalis, was close with Craig and Gary Cook, who would visit Canada to ride in the Rockies, while also bringing bikes and parts for the shop. I am the third owner of the bike. I purchased it from a collector who bought it from the original owner, neither of whom seem to have put many miles on it, given the Alpine's stellar condition.—*Mike Berlin*

Photos: Matt Stetson

THE SCENE

ME VS. THE RACE WINNER

ABOVE
The author, Hannah Marais

BOTTOM
Kieran Sharpe, the winner

Two big achievements at an ultra-endurance event, only one victor

by **Hannah Marais**

Just before eight in the morning on Aug. 24, a group of 21 cyclists started to form at the Hawk, a beach on Cape Sable island, the southernmost point of Nova Scotia. They had come to this foggy spot for the start of the fourth edition of the Tip 2 Tip, a single stage, self-supported ultra-endurance race from one end of the province to the other. The Tip 2 Tip has no fixed route. The organizers set six checkpoints that the riders have to reach whichever way they choose. The race always ends at Meat Cove in Cape Breton.

That morning, toward the front of the pack, wearing a skinsuit with bright stripes and eating from a large bag of marshmallows, was Kieran Sharpe, who'd go on to win. He looked remarkably composed for a man facing a 1,000 km ride.

Somewhere slightly behind and to the left of Sharpe, wearing purple bib shorts, a jersey with a large white cat on the front and likely looking indescribably nervous, was me.

In most events, Sharpe and I would not be on the same start line. So, how did our experiences compare?

The lead-up

Having already ridden and won the race twice, as well as racing for team Nova Scotia, Sharpe came into the 2024 edition knowing mostly what to expect. His focus for 2024 was solely on winning the race.

I went into the Tip 2 Tip with no ultra-endurance experience, not counting an attempt at a different ultra-endurance event in June, during which I was forced to scratch after only 200 km due to a knee issue. Unlike Sharpe, I was riding the Tip 2 Tip simply because I could and to see how far I could get.

The race experience

Our experiences on the road differed as well. With his eyes set firmly on victory, Sharpe aimed for the most efficient route, stopping as little as possible. Several hundred kilometres behind him, I meandered, stopping multiple times a day, mostly sleeping at night and occasionally getting lost.

At the second checkpoint, Courthouse Hill, Sharpe was quite efficient. He only climbed half of the hill—which was all he needed for his tracker to ping the checkpoint—before heading onward. I, however, climbed the full hill twice. I had gotten lost trying to find the only gas station in the area and descended the hill the wrong way, forcing myself to climb it again.

During the 46.5 hours that Sharpe was on the road, he slept for a grand total of two hours. By the time he crossed the finish line, he was hallucinating. He pulled over by the side of the road to make himself neater for a videographer, who was actually a pylon.

Though I did some riding in the dark, I managed to get a full night's sleep in a motel every night of the ride.

The outcome

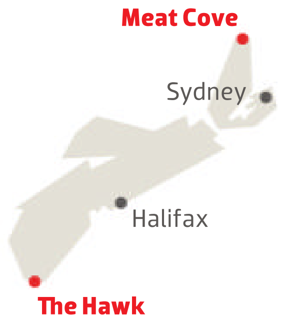
Sharpe set the fastest time in this year's race. He rode just under 1,054 km at an average speed of 28.3 km/h.

I rolled into Sydney, on Cape Breton Island, a little more than two days after Sharpe finished. After a lot of thinking and a long phone call with my dad, I decided to call it there. In total, I rode 846 km at an average speed of 20.1 km/h.

TIP
CAMPING
CABINS
YAK RENTALS

In the end, it all comes down to a difference in perspective. For Sharpe, winning his third edition of the race with a sub-48 hour time was a huge accomplishment. For me, riding 846 km solo across the province in four days was the same. In fact, for someone who had never ridden more than 100 km in one go before this year, it may have been bigger.

> *"By the time he crossed the finish line, he was hallucinating."*



Photos: Ashleigh Myles

THE SCENE

BIKE BALLADS

> "There are a lot of songs about cars and romanticizing the automobile, but there's not a whole lot about bike riding."

Country-folk band The Idaho Stop rolls through with a message

by **James Bunga**

Joel Dalton ascended many Bay Street office towers from the mid-2000s to mid-2010s. In the elevators of those buildings, he couldn't help but think about the relationship between bike messengers like him and the suits he delivered to. From up high, it was easy for Dalton to see how the struggles of working people down below were often overlooked by those behind the paycheques. Those experiences inspired many of the songs by Dalton, which he performs with his band, The Idaho Stop.

The name is in reference to the practice of treating a stop sign like a yield, allowing cyclists to roll through when it's safe to do so. It's one of many themes around cycling and being a bike messenger that flows throughout the group's songs. The band, consisting of Dalton, Madeleine St-Pierre, Luis Figeuroa, Kayle Donner and Owen Norquay, started in 2011 while Dalton was working as a courier in Toronto. The band's country-folk sound tells many different stories, but some are personal for Dalton, like the song "White Bicycles."

The song is about bike messenger Darcy Allan Sheppard's death in 2009. Sheppard was involved in a traffic altercation with former Ontario Attorney General Michael Bryant. Sheppard died. Bryant never went to trial for his actions. "It hit home for a lot of messengers because everybody knows what it's like to experience the rage of a motorist," Dalton said. "I actually delivered a package to Bryant. It was a strange experience because I went there, obviously full of hate, and didn't know what to expect. He answered the door and he's like, 'Oh, hi!' He was very nice. I could hear in the background he had been watching cartoons with his kid. And I thought, how do I hate this guy? So it was just a very interesting, kind of surreal experience coming face to face with the guy who's sort of the object of the wrath of basically every bike messenger and a lot of cyclists."

"White Bicycles" is one of many songs the band has written, but only one of three songs released on their self-titled debut EP. Dalton is working to record some of the unreleased songs in the coming 12 months. "There's a lot of examples of songs about cars and romanticizing the automobile, but there's not a whole lot of examples of songs about bike riding," he said. "So I want to add to the canon. I think it ties in with the country music theme of being oppressed and downtrodden. With the cycling community, we always have to fight tooth and nail for any respect. We're constantly being run off the road by angry motorists, so I think there's a common theme there."

These days it's hard to earn a living as a bike messenger, but the message of the music still rings true with more and more controversy around cycling infrastructure. Dalton encourages everyone to advocate for safer cycling in Toronto and around the world. "We need anybody who enjoys riding a bike to get involved," he said. "Speak to your city councillor, sign a petition, show up for a community event. Make your voice heard." C

Photos: James Bunga

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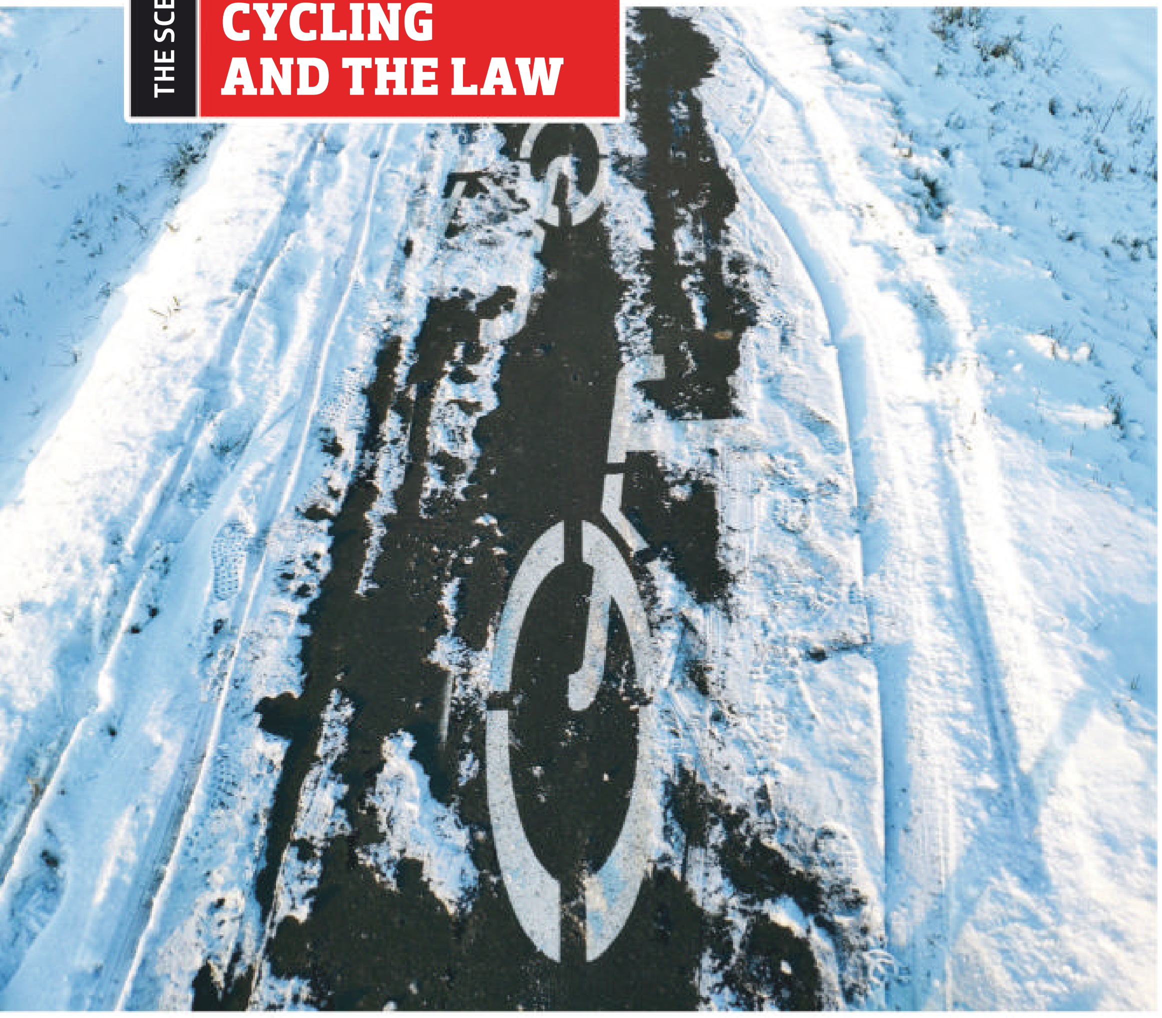
CYCLING AND THE LAW



> "A Supreme Court of Canada case may require municipalities to keep bike lanes reasonably clear of snow and safe to ride during the winter."

What we can do about snow-covered bike lanes

by **Dave Shellnutt**

Cycling in Canada is a year-round affair. From coast to coast, you'll find people on bikes commuting to work, taking kids to school and exercising. In many municipalities, there's safe bike infrastructure that can support riding all year. But if cities and towns fail to clear bike lanes of snow, or haphazardly do so, riders are forced out into faster moving traffic, removing them from safety.

You likely won't be surprised when I say that infrastructure is essential for keeping riders safe. A study published in the *Journal of Transport & Health* in 2019 that was based on 13 years of data from 12 U.S. cities showed that protected bicycle facilities are better for everyone's well-being—cyclists and motorists. But if the infrastructure isn't in full working order—that is, it's blocked with snow—safety is compromised.

In most of Canada, we must be diligent in clearing snow from our bikeways. If you build it, you must maintain it and make it safe. That's what we advocate for and what we advance in cases in which snow, ice or other environmental hazards create bike-lane blockages that result in cyclist injuries. We believe the outcome of the Supreme Court of Canada case Nelson (City) vs. Marchi may require municipalities to keep bike lanes reasonably clear of snow and safe to ride during the winter.

The case grew out of a heavy snowfall in Nelson, B.C., in 2015. City employees cleared snow from angled city street parking stalls and the adjacent sidewalk. This process created a snowbank between the sidewalk and parking spots, but no path from street parking to the businesses they were meant to serve. Taryn Joy Marchi exited her car and was forced to climb over the snowbank to get from the road to the sidewalk. She fell and seriously injured herself.

The Supreme Court had to decide if the way in which the snow was cleared—leaving banks between parking and the sidewalk—was negligent. That decision hinged on one question: was the snow removal in this case a policy decision or an operational decision? A policy decision is something dictated by budgets, resources and political factors. For these types of decisions, governments are shielded from lawsuits.

The Supreme Court held that the snowbanks between parking spaces and the sidewalk in Nelson came out of an operational decision. As such, the snow removal procedure was subject to the court's review.

Despite the onus we believe the Supreme Court's decision puts on municipalities, we see inconsistencies across the country. This past winter in Guelph, Ont., bike lanes remained filled or partially covered in snow for more than a week after a significant weather event. In Montreal, bike lanes are often snow-free before roads and sidewalks. The lanes are easier to clear because there are fewer kilometres of bike paths compared with roads. Also, in contrast with sidewalks, bike lanes have fewer obstacles and can be plowed with a simple pickup with a snowplow instead of a specialized machine. After a really tough winter in 2022–23, Edmonton city officials promised targeted attention to bike-lane snow removal for the following season, aiming to clear priority bike routes within 24 hours. They even launched a live map to keep themselves honest.

The developments in Montreal and Edmonton are promising. But, we need to encourage winter cycling in Canada beyond the larger urban centres. Cyclists in municipalities across the country need to ask their local governments to be proactive in bike-lane snow removal. Make the case that if the routes are cleared, people will ride. Winter countries, like Denmark, Finland and Norway, see robust levels of cycling year-round. The same could happen across Canada, but not if we continue to put up roadblocks, or rather, large ice mounds that only elite mountain bikers can navigate.

Municipalities who cite resource issues ought to consider carefully the impact of Nelson vs. Marchi. If bike lane clearing is a day-to-day budget decision, perhaps opting to spend a few extra dollars or hours could save people from injury and our governments from expensive lawsuits. And riders could get to their destinations safely through the cold, crisp winter air.

Dave Shellnutt is the founder and managing partner of The Biking Lawyer LLP, lawyers for injured cyclists, *thebikinglawyer.ca*

Deadgoat Racing

Riding hard and having fun in Calgary and around the world

by **Rob Sturney**

THE SCENE

CANADIAN CLUB

PROFILE
Deadgoat Racing

City	Calgary
Established	1995 (club), 1999 (race team)
Members	40–50
Website	*deadgoat.ca*

> *"The only continent we haven't raced in is Antarctica. But if there is a race there, we have two guys who will go."*

Calgary Deadgoat is a off-road gang. It takes its name from the famous, much-missed basement joint in Salt Lake City, the Dead Goat Saloon, that club president Tim Brezsnyak visited on a 1989 ski trip.

Brezsnyak describes the cycling club as half racing, half riding, despite its competitive name. Although Brezsnyak established the Deadgoats in 1995, it wasn't until 1999 that he and new Calgarian Pat Doyle launched the race team with five riders. The next year, the numbers were up to 38. Today, there are 40 to 50 goats in the herd. Last year, this Alberta Bicycling Association unit evolved into a non-profit corporate organization.

Since its creation, Deadgoat Racing's ranks have been populated by older folks ("keeping riders off walkers," Brezsnyak jokes), but recently there has been an influx of "kids," many are the children of existing members, propelling the club into the future.

Deadgoat is situated close to prime trails. Within 60 km to the west are both Bragg Creek and Station Flats, and Kananaskis and Canmore are within 105 km. These are the Deadgoats' main stomping grounds.

The club's season centrepiece is its Ghost of the Gravel in Water Valley, just northwest of Calgary. This past June, the event also doubled as the Canadian gravel championships. As Adam Roberge and Katja Verkerk earned the national elite titles, 112 intrepid souls took on the 118-km Scary Ghost and 42 riders tackled the 78-km Friendly Ghost, both open events for riders looking for gravel challenges. In 2025, the Deadgoats will host the ninth edition of Ghost and national championships together again.

Not satisfied with just long dirty races on roads, the Deadgoats also put on an annual Supercross cyclocross event in Cochrane every fall.

Deadgoats like to travel to get in their kicks and contests, whether it's gravel riding in Moab and St. George, Utah, or racing in another enduro, Salmon Arm, B.C.,'s Salty Dog. Breckenridge, Colo.'s Breck Epic draws club members to the classic six-day mountain bike stage race. Seriously committed riders challenge La Ruta de los Conquistadores in Costa Rica. Leaving the Western Hemisphere altogether you'll encounter Deadgoats astride bikes on the Tour d'Afrique, or Nepal's Yak Attack, the highest bike race in the world. "The only continent we haven't raced in is Antarctica," Brezsnyak says, "but if there is a race there, we have two guys who will go."

If you have only one day's stay in Calgary, Brezsnyak recommends riding in the West Bragg Creek area, promising hard clambers, breathless descents and gorgeous vistas if you link up Ranger Summit, Snakes and Ladders, Ridgeback 2 and 1, and then ascend Sugar Mama before dropping along Strange Brew.

Brezsnyak's club balances fun, adventure and competition. "We aim to rip legs off on the trail, but be sporting, kind, fun and helpful at the same time," he says. "We take riding up a notch so we can get on the podiums in almost every race we attend."

SINGLETRACK 6

Photos: Courtesy Dead Goat Racing

Clearwater's Finely Crafted Trails

The routes in east-central British Columbia add up to much more than the sum of their features

by **Scott MacGregor**

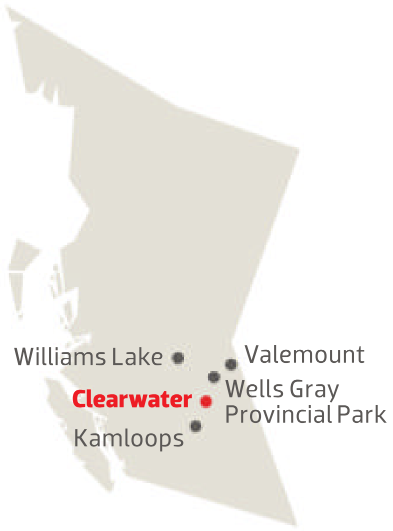
Working my way up the green climber Greasy Jungle for another lap, I realized the math doesn't make sense.

The Wells Gray website says the Candle Creek bike trail system, located just outside the town of Clearwater, B.C., has 28 km of flowy fun. The Wells Gray Outdoor Club, which has built and maintains the Candle Creek trails, says on its website there is a combination of 7.3 km of green trails, 12 km of blue and 3 km of black—so a little more than 22. But the 16 trails listed on the sign at the trailhead totals 33 km. According to Trailforks, Candle Creek has 22 trails, but lists only 19. I pulled up my knee pads, rolled into Brain Shake and made a mental note to get to the bottom of this.

"We got original approvals and funding back in 2013, and began building in 2014," says mountain bike trails committee member Aaron Cooperman. "Our primary intention was to develop trails for locals and create a riding community. And what do you know, if you build trails, people start getting into it."

The Wells Gray Outdoors Club's community-focused approach to trail development is working. Club president and local high school teacher, Darren Coates, says they now have more than 70 active card-carrying riders. Far more local individuals and families drop in a few times a summer, not to mention people from out of town, like me.

While community development was the original plan, Tourism Wells Gray is putting Candle Creek on the mountain biking map. Clearwater has joined Vast and Flowy, a clever play on words for a mountain bike trail marketing consortium including nearby Kamloops and Williams Lake. Turns out, the same thoughtful trail building and trail management that works for creating community also makes for a sweet place to visit and ride.



"We started with a clean slate able to meet the new standards. We set maximum and average grades for the builders," Coates told me. "We wanted to make the most of our vertical. And we're a small club; we don't have the resources to fix trails that are too steep."

If your jam is old-school fall-line jank, you won't find it in Clearwater. There is hardly a braking bump in the entire network.

"We wanted to establish something unique. We needed variety and options for locals to not get bored. The goal was to only build quality trails," Cooperman says. "We focused on true natural-feeling singletrack, even though most of it is built by machine. We've worked with builders like Dave Biggin-Pound from Revelstoke who gets it—he really cares."

This makes sense to me. Biggin-Pound's UTC—Ultimate Frisbee Connector—trail in Revelstoke rides the same—poppy root berms, natural step-ups and step-downs, clever rocks rolls—designed with just the right entry speed, no brakes necessary.

In 2017, when the community asked the Outdoor Club for a jump trail of their own, it created Fat Lip

Photos: Aedan Skinner

with the help of George Brcko, manager of the Wells Gray Community Forest Corporation.

The Wells Gray Outdoor Club and the Wells Gray Community Forest share the same chunk of Crown land. Instead of a turf war over natural resources like in so many regions, in Clearwater the two organizations work together.

"We're fortunate to have a non-profit sharing our tenure," Cooperman says. "They want to do good for the community. Some of the people on the Community Forest board members ride the trails."

In fact, roughly half of the $600,000 trail development funding has come from Wells Gray Community Forest. Before trails are built, Brcko and the trail committee walk the proposed route. When sections are logged, trees are flagged and left to border and protect the integrity of the trails. Also, Wells Gray Community Forest lent a hand with their big equipment to pile dirt for the 20 jumps and berms needed to create Fat Lip.

"If your jam is old-school fall-line jank, you won't find it in Clearwater. There is hardly a braking bump in the entire network."

That jump line is perfect for a few fun laps after work or school. It's rated a black, but the bottom half is really a blue with lots of small beginner jumps. Don't be pumping for more speed. Come in too hot and sendy like I did on the first lap and you'll be overshooting the transitions. This is a community trail network after all. All the features are friendly and rollable.

"We think for the community, we have a good mix of trails," Cooperman says. "All but a few black trails are two-way trails, giving the network twice the kilometres of trails and more loop options."

The other thing I noticed is that Clearwater feels true to grade.

There are two ways to rate new government-funded trail builds in British Columbia. You either downgrade things, but may include features one grade higher. An example is calling a trail blue even though it has some black features. Or, you rate a trail for its hardest features, even though the rest could be the grade below. Clearwater has done the latter, which makes sense to me when you're building a community trail network.

The greens are really green by design, to get more people into biking. Pub Feed, Brain Shake, Higher Ground and Fat Lip are all black trails but ones I think most blue trail riders can enjoy.

So what's the best way to enjoy Candle Creek?

My first afternoon, I parked at the upper parking area and climbed Fiddlers Green and then Greasy Jungle all the way to an intersection that feels like the top. Here you'll find a stainless-steel dog bowl and a few benches to catch your breath and contemplate your options.

I chose Brain Shake, a piece of old schoolish singletrack over rock rolls, ladders, log rides and small drops. Brain Shake is black but everything rolls or rides around and it's way more fun and flowier than the name suggests. If that's all the time you have, rip the Fat Lip jump line back to the truck.

If I lived in Clearwater, Pub Feed would be my after-work special. It's the trail I'd tell friends they need to ride when they come to town. It enters off Road 90—so it can be shuttled—from a wood roller drop. There are jumps, rocks, rolls, roots, step-ups, step-downs. It's like they took everything fun about trail riding and strung it together on a 2.2-km-long Christmas garland and then laid it gently upon the lower part of Raft Mountain.

Coming down from the upper trails or as part of your lower loop, I insist you ride down Raft Rim. Maybe that trail could provide you more time to enjoy the canyon view over Raft River, but I wouldn't know. I've never actually taken in the view. The trail is too fun to ride down. You'll see. Raft Rim is also the only trail in this network not named after a song, or at least a song on Spotify. Yes, I searched for it.

Ten years after the first shovel made the first berm, the Wells Gray Outdoor Club has a network worthy of a weekend road trip. I asked Coates and Cooperman what's next?

"After asking around the community, we think we are missing an

Photos: Aedan Skinner

accessibility trail for hand cyclists and young children," Coates says. "We'd use the area around our green Swamp Loop trail."

The other really big dream is another descending trail from the ridge you can see from top of Pub Feed. It would add another 5 or 6 km to the network.

"It would be awesome, but also expensive," Coates says. "Six kilometres of trail at $30 to $40 per metre could be a $200K-build by the time we get funding."

By the time you read this, the math about the amount of trails in Clearwater won't matter. The Outdoor Club already has approvals and contracts in place with builders for the spring. They will be adding another 600 m of climbing to Higher Ground that will get them to 1,120 m of elevation, and adding 300 m to the top of Pub Feed. That adds up to more biking to discover in Clearwater, no matter what math you're using.

Details

How to get there

The town of Clearwater—the gateway to the Wells Gray Provincial Park, as they say—is pretty much in the middle of the bottom half of British Columbia. It's 90 minutes north on Highway 5 up the scenic North Thompson River Valley from the iconic riding of Kamloops and just two hours south of the Valemount Bike Park. Williams Lake is 2.5 hours to the west.

Where to stay

In 2021, Recreation Trails and Sites B.C. added the Raft Rim sites at the bottom of the trail network overlooking Raft River Canyon. Here you'll find six tent sites, picnic tables, washrooms and donation boxes for your $15-per-night contribution. Don't carry cash like me? Payments can be made by e-transfer to *payments@wellsgrayoutdoorsclub.ca*

I've also stayed at Cedar Haven Resort in cabins and luxurious glamping tents. It's located just outside the trail network boundary on Barber Road. Book early, before the European waterfall hikers come to town. Or, download the Tourism Wells Gray Visitor's Guide (*wellsgray.ca/plan/visitor-guide*) for a list of eight hotels, 23 B&Bs, five full-service fancy resorts or 784 nearby camp and RV sites. You get the idea; there's no reason to sleep in your car.

Where to eat and drink

Clearwater has the usual roadside fast-food chain restaurants lining the highway, if you must. Trust me, you'd rather have the brisket at Hop N Hog Tap & Smokehouse (*hopnhog.ca*), the bacon and blue cheese burger at Gateway Grill (*gatewaygrill.ca*), the homemade bratwurst at Clearwater Stop, the traditional breakfast at the Wells Gray Inn (also the liquor store and local bar), and fancy coffees, fresh bread and treats at the Wild Flour Cafe Bakery (*wildflourcafe.ca*).

Scott MacGregor is the founder and former publisher of *Paddling Magazine*. The Clearwater trails are all song titles, except one. He's created Spotify playlists, ordered in how he thinks the trails are best ridden. Search in Spotify for Clearwater Bike Trails.

The Best Canned Foods to Stash in Your Pantry

Open up some easy and nutritious ingredients for your meals

by **Matthew Kadey**

In a perfect world, we would all be making meals from scratch using only the freshest ingredients. But when we need to juggle family, work and training commitments, we often don't have the energy or time for such kitchen tasks. We're simply looking to press the easy button to get a meal on the table. Besides, fresh ingredients aren't always as fresh as we would hope, especially when out-of-season locally.

Enter canned food. Certainly, these humble staples can be a hack to getting grub in your belly quicker and with less effort than cooking from scratch. Yet, cans often get a bad rap and are thought to be nutritionally inferior and less flavourful than fresh or even frozen foods. But many canned foods are typically still nutrient-rich because the canning process has less of an effect on nutrition than you may think. With a lengthy shelf life, canned food lets you stock up without much worry about costly waste.

So bust out your can opener and add these four tinned foods to your diet for a quick nutrition boost. As for canned fruit cocktail—I still don't go there.

Mackerel

In any given supermarket, you can probably cast your line for a tin of mackerel even though it often goes unnoticed in a sea of tuna and salmon. This swimmer houses troves of nutrients. Not only is canned mackerel high in protein (roughly 20 g in a can) to help you hold onto your lean body mass, the fatty fish is also a strong source of life-extending omega-3 fatty acids. A 2024 study published in the *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* found that subjects with higher omega-3 levels live longer and are specifically less likely to die from cardiovascular disease and cancer. There is also some evidence that greater intakes of omega-3s can help lessen exercise-induced muscle soreness. As a bonus, you'll also net a healthy dose of vitamin D, a nutrient needed for proper bone health and muscle functioning but one that most of us fail to get enough of. You can add canned mackerel to sandwiches, pasta dishes and even salads. Or for a high-protein snack, smash it on whole-grain crackers.

Peaches

Nobody should endure a fresh peach in January that has all the juiciness of a rock. Canned peaches offer a more flavourful year-round option for this fruit. Surprisingly, the nutritional content of canned peaches, including amounts of vitamin C and folate, is comparable to that of the fresh fruit. There's a stack of research demonstrating that when people eat more daily servings of fruits, fresh or canned, their risk for several health conditions like heart disease is lowered. Not to mention canned peaches are a way to work quality carbs into your diet to help you keep pedalling strong. They are a great topping for cereal, yogurt and salads. You can use the juice to add a touch of fruity sweetness to salad dressings. Also, blend them into post-ride smoothies.

A Word on Salt

Some canned foods can be high in salt, particularly fish and beans. While this does not pose a health risk for some people and the extra salt can be helpful in replenishing stores after a sweaty ride, it's still a good idea to moderate your salt intake. You can now find more low-sodium or no-salt-added options. Placing canned beans in a colander and rinsing them well with a stream of water will lower their sodium content significantly.

> "Cans often get a bad rap, but many are nutrient-rich."

Pumpkin

Pumpkin makes for a great way to sweeten up your diet. Consider canned pumpkin purée as one of the best sources of the plant-based compound beta carotene. Our bodies can convert beta-carotene into vitamin A, which is needed to maintain eye, immune and bone health. A study in the *European Journal of Nutrition* found that people with higher levels of carotenoids, including beta carotene, tested for a younger biological age as indicated by longer telomeres—DNA sequences at the end of chromosomes that shorten as cells replicate and age. Canned pumpkin—the purée, not the pie filling full of sugar that sits nearby in the grocery store—is also a good source of vitamin K, a nutrient important for supporting better bone strength. The purée mixes well in the batter of pancakes and waffles for some extra sweetness. It's also easy to stir the purée into yogurt or oatmeal, or blend into smoothies and dips. I'm a big fan of adding canned pumpkin to a pot of chili.

Black beans

Talk about a healthy fast food. With a large range of essential vitamins and minerals—iron, magnesium, folate and phosphorus—consider black beans (and all canned beans, for that matter) almost akin to multi-vitamins in a can. It's no wonder that people who eat more legumes, including canned beans, generally have a higher overall diet quality. Canned beans are also a fibre powerhouse, with as much as 15 g in a cup serving. Recent science suggests that increasing the intake of soluble fibre, which beans are a source of, can help improve blood pressure numbers for better heart health. The bonus of black beans is that they are a source of anthocyanins, the same class of potent health-benefiting antioxidants that you find in blueberries and blackberries. As for those uncomfortable and embarrassing gassy after-effects, draining canned black beans in a colander and then rinsing them well will send a high proportion of the gas-producing compounds down the drain. With that said, spoonfuls of canned black beans are still not advisable as a pre-ride fuel. Use canned black beans in soups, chili, tacos, burritos, salads and veggie burgers.

Matthew Kadey is a registered dietician and the designer of Ontario's BT 700 bikepacking route.

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Chipotle Black Bean Burgers with Peach Salsa

Serves 4

1 cup cooked or canned black beans
1 ½ cups mashed sweet potato
1 cup cooked brown rice, cooled
¾ cup almond flour or oat flour
½ cup chopped cilantro
2 tbsp chipotle chili pepper in adobo sauce, minced
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tsp cumin
¾ tsp salt, divided
¼ tsp black pepper
1 cup canned peaches, chopped
1 red bell pepper, diced
1 green onion, sliced
⅓ cup basil, chopped
1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and finely chopped
Juice of ½ lime

1. Add black beans to a mixing bowl and mash gently so they still have some texture. Mix in sweet potato, rice, flour, cilantro, chipotle pepper, garlic, cumin, ½ tsp salt and black pepper. Form into four patties and chill in the refrigerator for 30 minutes or more. Cook patties for 4 minutes per side.
2. To make the salsa, combine peaches, bell pepper, green onion, basil, jalapeno, lime juice and ¼ tsp salt.
3. Serve burgers topped with peach salsa.

Make Big Improvements with More Short Rides

Why adding bite-size workouts to a busy week will pay off

TRAINING

TRAINING TIPS

by **Peter Glassford**

> *"The consistency builds a habit that keeps you engaged and motivated."*

Would you go for a bike ride if it were only 30-minutes long? What could such a ride give you? Probably not much in terms of kudos on social media, where duration and intensity are the training variables that seem to get the most attention. There is, however, a third that gets overlooked and yet holds tremendous benefit for adult cyclists. It's frequency. By prioritizing frequency in training you can reach a higher level of fitness and develop a resilient routine without trying to cram extra hours or harder intervals into your busy day.

Short-term gains with regular exercise

Some adaptations take weeks or months to erode but others will change quickly. For example, plasma blood volume—a key component of aerobic fitness due to its relation to cardiac output and VO_2 max—can decrease within 48 hours of inactivity. You have likely noticed these changes after some time off manifested as a higher heart rate and a sluggish feeling.

The exciting thing is that you can maintain adaptations with short sessions that do not need to be intense (but certainly could be aided by short high-intensity work). You could commute, do a quick sunset spin or watch a 20-minute show while you're on the indoor trainer. You'll then find that you feel more ready for the next day's workout. Without these workouts, the declines and poor workout sensations can compound: it's hard to make progress. Athletes who maintain these adaptations will feel better more often in their key weekly workouts and make more progress longterm. Indeed, Stephen Seiler's 2010 investigation into intensity distribution also makes mention of the likely benefit of more low-intensity sessions to benefit adaptations to training.

Frequency for all levels of rider

For newer cyclists, the key is to move regularly. Any duration or intensity works so long as it happens often. Ideally, the new riders will progress from one or two sessions per week to five or six. For intermediates, the weekly long ride becomes important, but the challenge is to maintain frequency while adding a bit of time to one or two rides per week. Beware of the weekend-warrior pattern, which derails frequency. One big ride on the weekend ends up requiring a lot of recovery, fewer rides per week and a lower overall training load. Advanced cyclists, who train most days of the week and log significant training volume consistently, can try adding doubles: two sessions a day to further leverage the power of frequent exercise and recovery periods.

Building the habit

Frequency helps to develop positive habits. Many athletes I've worked with find it more painful *not* to ride than to get out and do a short workout. Establishing a daily movement routine doesn't mean every session needs to be long or hard, but the consistency builds a habit that keeps you engaged and motivated. Even on rest days, a light activity—whether it's a walk, swim or yoga session—keeps your mind and body in the training rhythm.

More sessions, easier feeling

In a paper published in 2021, Emil Johnsen and Roland van den Tillaar compared the effects of the same total volume of strength training performed in two sessions versus four. In cycling terms, the scenario would be akin to four one-hour rides versus two two-hour rides. Interestingly, both groups in the study achieved similar fitness results, but the higher-frequency group reported lower perceived exertion (RPE) and less soreness.

This decreased RPE is part of the reason advanced athletes do multiple sessions per day. One of the benefits of doubles is that riders tend to feel better and have higher quality sessions. Similarly, I find masters who train more often but for shorter periods find it easier to get on the bike and focus for 30–90 minutes compared with 2–3 hours, especially when cycling indoors.

Frequency is an underrated training principle that can help cyclists maintain consistency and improve fitness. The challenge can be convincing yourself that short workouts are worth it in a world where longer and harder seem to dominate. The next time you're on the fence about squeezing in a 15-minute strength session, a 10-minute bike skills practice, or a quick run, remember the oft-quoted words of Eddy Merckx, "Ride as much or as little, as long or as short as you feel. But ride."

Peter Glassford is a registered kinesiologist and coach at *consummateathlete.com*.

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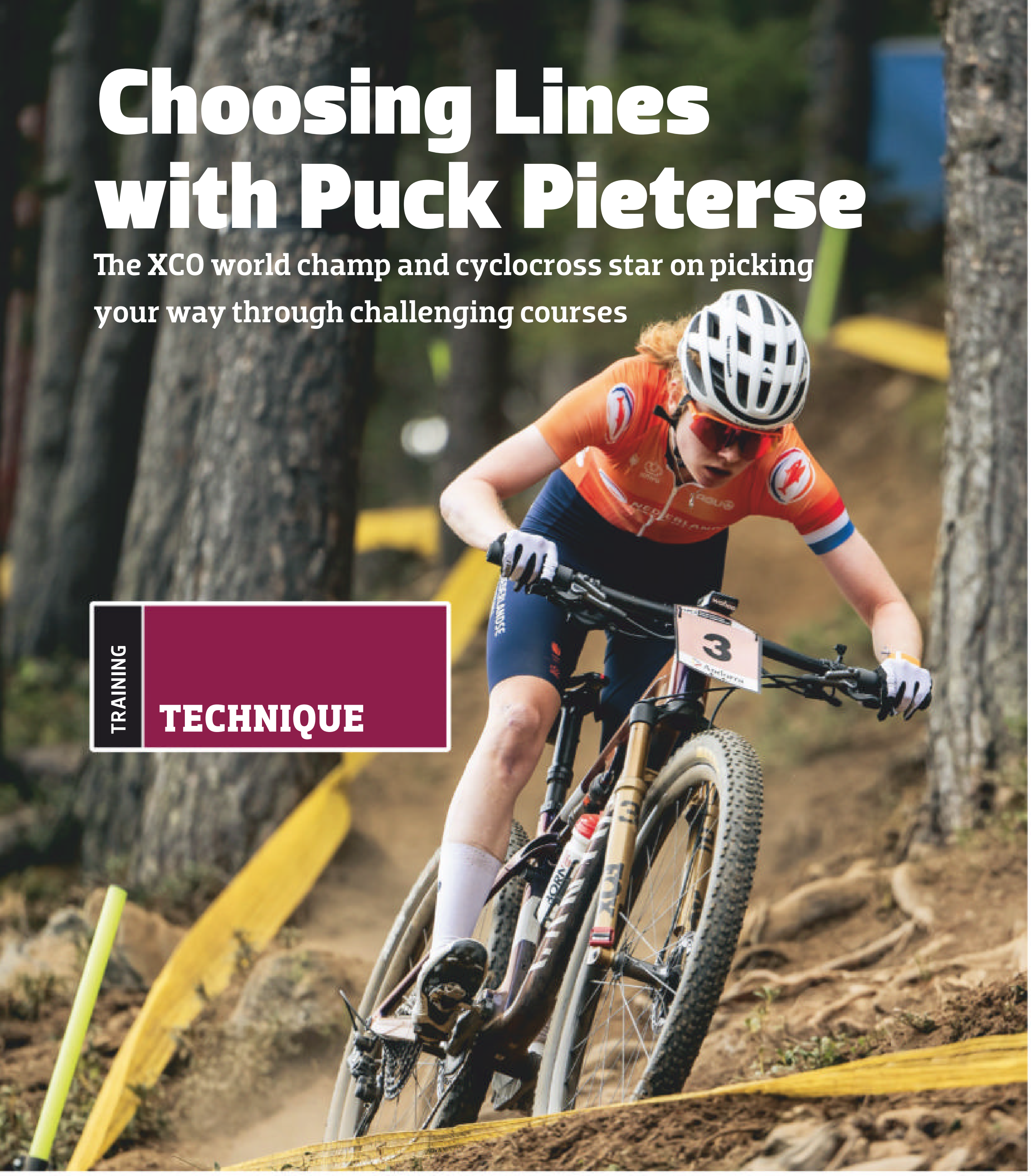
Choosing Lines with Puck Pieterse

The XCO world champ and cyclocross star on picking your way through challenging courses



TOP
Puck Pieterse at the 2024 UCI XCO world championships in Andorra

Photo: Bartek Wolinski/Red Bull Content Pool

by **Steve Thomas**

Puck Pieterse—the Dutch rider who won the XCO world championships on Sept. 1, the under-23 road worlds title later that month and who's been on multiple cyclocross world championship podiums—is something of a master at finding the right lines on both the cross country mountain bike and cyclocross race courses. She just seems to have a knack for pinning together the sweetest and swiftest of lines. Pieterse is also known for her pre-race lap recon videos on YouTube, where she shows us just how she does it.

> *"That's my limit. I know that if I go any faster, I'll crash on the next corner."*

Here, in Pieterse's own words, are tips that can help you get around off-road routes smoothly.

Speed or safety first?

You need to find the right combination of speed and safety. Sometimes you can take a faster line, but you will feel it in the bike—if you're still in control that is. Sometimes I follow my teammate Sam Gaze in the recon, and I can feel that speed. That's my limit. I know that if I go any faster, I'll crash on the next corner. Once you sense that, then you can take the faster option, but the lines have to be ones that you can do in the race.

Sometimes you have lines that are really nice, but you have to think if you can do them consistently in the race. If it's four times out of six, then that's not enough. If you crash those other two times, you lose time or worse.

We spend a lot of time doing the recons. On the first day, it's usually slow, riding maybe an hour, but half of that is standing around, watching other people's lines, and then doing sections again and again, until you find the right combination that works for you.

Have a Plan B

In Andorra, at the cross country world championships, we weren't sure what the weather would be like. Rain was forecasted for the day before the race. In the recon, we practised so-called wet lines. When I had all my A lines dialed for dry conditions, we went back again for wet conditions, so that I'd have other options over the difficult sections if needed.

I always try to have B lines in place, as it often happens that someone crashes in front of you. If you've found and tried the B line, you're ready.

MTB vs. cyclocross lines

With the mountain bike, you're a bit more open during recon because the technical sections are quite tricky if you haven't ridden them yet.

In cyclocross, you can come on the race day itself and ride two laps. Usually, you don't have to stop, maybe once for a descent, so there it's more done on feel. Some courses, like Namur, are quite tricky, and there are different lines. But in most races, there are not many different lines or options—apart from how you approach a corner.

Sand and mud

In the sand, there are sometimes two big ruts. They are the only options. It's a matter of trying both and finding which you prefer.

Roots and rocks

Roots are tricky, especially if you approach them from an angle. It's similar on rocks. If you brake on them, it's slippery. So it's best to try to face them square on and to carry your speed in and over them. Also, keep an eye on the overall picture—as in what comes next and where things line up at the other end.

How to Make Your Parts, and Bike, Last Longer

With the right schedule, you'll get years of life out of your ride

by **Nick Di Cristofaro**

Since modern gear isn't cheap, it's best to extend the life of your equipment. By arming yourself with a little knowledge and a regular maintenance schedule, you can extend the lifespan of your bike and its components. getting the most bang for your buck.

Before the first ride

You just picked up your brand new ride. So fresh and shiny. You're tempted to take it out, but hold back. It's best to do some maintenance before you ride. Make sure you grease the headset, and even the crank spindle and bottom bracket. Most of the time, this step isn't done properly from the factory. You can also ask for this service from your shop before picking up your new bike.

If your bike will spend a lot of time off-road, you might want to invest in a frame-protection system or kit. These can include plastic guards for a mountain bike or clear adhesive tape for a gravel bike. I always put a piece of this tape on the top of the drive-side chainstay to protect the paint from chain slap or debris. Should your bike have external cable routing, protect the areas of the head or down tube that will face friction from the housing.

> *"Treat yourself to fresh bar tape, a relatively inexpensive upgrade."*

Maintenance in the first six to 12 months

Clean and lube the drivetrain regularly. Wipe the chain every couple of rides and completely clean it every one to two weeks. Always reapply lube afterwards. If you have ridden in the rain, clean and lube immediately after your ride. Invest in a chain-wear indicator tool; check your chain wear on a regular basis. Even if you will not be replacing the chain yourself, you can still monitor the wear. Replace the chain before it goes completely: between 50 to 75 per cent wear. If you let the chain go beyond 75 per cent, you will begin to wear out your chainrings and cassette a lot faster, while also compromising shifting performance. A cassette can cost more than $400, and you will need to replace it if you let the chain wear out.

What the bike needs between its first and fifth years

Get your bike serviced at least once a year—a complete overhaul, if you ride a lot. A good shop will find things that need to be replaced and make suggestions.

Fresh bar tape is always nice, so treat yourself to this relatively inexpensive upgrade. Smelly, old bar tape not only looks bad, it can also lead to corrosion at the handlebars and shifter clamps.

You will almost certainly need a fluid flush or bleed after you replace worn out hydraulic disc brake pads. The calipers should be cleaned and pistons lubed. Replace brake cables and housing for mechanical brakes.

On your mountain bike or gravel bike, get the suspension serviced. Treat suspension like a separate entity. It will have its own periodic maintenance schedule set by the manufacturer.

On mechanical systems, replacing cables and housing restores that snappy shifting feeling. Consider using sealed ferrules and housing on mountain and gravel bikes. At the absolute least, replace the rear shift cable once to twice a year. If it frays inside the lever, it could not only leave you stuck inconveniently in the middle of nowhere, it will require time, labour and money to remove it from the shifter.

Tire sealant will dry out in eight to 12 months. If you are not replacing the tires, then it is best to remove each tread, clean it out, and then add new sealant. While the rear tire wears at a faster rate than the front, I advise against rotating tires. Putting a worn tire on the front will compromise safety and cornering control. Replace both as a pair.

Prevent a stuck seatpost before it happens. Remove it, clean it and reapply the proper goo—grease for alloy, carbon paste for carbon. Remove the handlebars from the stem, clean mating surfaces and reinstall. This step will also allow you (or your mechanic) to spot any cracks, rusted bolts or areas of concern before a failure happens.

Looking beyond five years

If you plan to keep your well-looked-after machine for a while, doing the above will make it have that new-bike feel for a long time. If you are in it for the long haul, then you might want to upgrade your groupset at some point before it becomes obsolete. This switch could be more cost-effective than replacing a bunch of worn out parts. You then get current technology and maybe an extra gear or two.

Nick Di Cristofaro is a veteran bike mechanic and the service manager at Forza Performance.

Past the Bottle

Booze and bikes have been linked for more than 100 years, but the connection is severing. What does it mean for cycling to drop the drink?

by **Melanie Chambers**

My mouth felt as dry as the Mexican riverbed we climbed that day. Dust clung to my throat. When I rode over the smallest rock or bump, my brain clanked against my skull, reverberating the words: *you idiot*.

I wasn't the only one in pain back in 2011. The group of us finished riding early the day before and headed to the local bar. We drank shots of tequila like we were 20 year olds. Before dawn every day of our weeklong mountain biking and yoga retreat in Sayulita, Mexico, we began with yoga. After the day's ride, we stretched again. I think the post ride-yoga was intended to replace the habitual après drink. But not that day.

Luckily, this was 13 years ago and my younger body could handle the booze. Now, not only is my body different, the mindset of the "ride hard, drink hard" is shifting. In recent years, public-health messaging against the drug has grown stronger. Now, it can feel as if the culture of drinking—our sacred post-ride beverage—is under attack. But for cyclists who still want to throw back a frosty brew after an epic ride, is it *that* bad? What are the effects on our performance, training and recovery? Is there a time when the buzz is worth it?

In January 2023, the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction's guidelines on alcohol changed sharply. Instead of 15 drinks weekly for men and 10 for women, the previous standard set in 2011, the latest recommendation is two standard drinks or fewer a week. That level is low risk. Moderate consumption is three to six drinks, which is associated with cancers such as breast, colon and liver, as well as esophageal. Finally, seven or more drinks a week is considered high risk and is linked with coronary disease and an increased chance for stroke.

The physical effects might be grim, but the social aspect is a hard habit to break. Cycling goes hand in hand with a rewarding drink: a cold one or a crisp chardonnay after touring the countryside.

Since moving to Rossland B.C., three years ago, I've met the majority of my friends on a brewery patio after mountain biking. It's the time to brag about the features you nailed or to commiserate over the dirt you ate. Back in my travel guidebook writing days, I wrote about wine bike tours in the Niagara region: sipping and riding through the vineyards was a glorious experience. Years later, when I joined a road cycling club in Toronto, the après-ride bar stop was the best way to get acquainted after focusing on drafting and avoiding traffic.

Booze goes way back into cycling's history. Five-time Tour de France winner Jacques Anquetil famously enjoyed champagne, in and out of competition. He was far from the only rider. In the early days of the Tour, cyclists didn't have the luxury of team cars or soigneurs to hand out water. Likewise, water from streams or rivers, even offered from spectators, wasn't always clean; alcohol seemed a safer bet. Team leaders would call for *la chasse à la canette*. The can hunt meant that cyclists would storm a bistro looking for all forms of drink, especially booze.

But those raids couldn't continue after the summer of 1967. During the 13th stage of the Tour de France, riders tackled Mont Ventoux. On the barren summit of the Giant of Provence, the winds can reach 90 km/h. On that day, the sun bouncing off the white limestone was particularly fierce. Tom Simpson, the leader of the British team, had not been well during that Tour. When a journalist asked about his ill health before the day's ride, Simpson replied, "No, it's not the heat, it's the Tour."

On Ventoux, reporters said he was weaving across the road. Only 1 km from the summit, he fell off his bike. He was put back on, then wobbled for almost 500 m before collapsing. People heard him yell, "On, on!" After he died, empty amphetamine vials were found in his rear jersey pocket and a post-mortem also revealed alcohol. The mix of drugs, combined with the heat and Simpson's drive to win, led to his death.

When alcohol enters your body after a ride, you could say it's like the loud guest at the party. Essentially, it takes over. Reaction time, hydration, heart rate, muscle repair, vitamin absorption—all are affected negatively.

Shortly after you take a drink, your stomach and small intestine absorb the alcohol. It then gets into your bloodstream. If your stomach is empty, absorption is 20 to 30 per cent faster.

Unless you were diligent during your ride, you're probably slightly dehydrated at the end of it. If you go for a beer, you're not giving your body what it needs. In fact, the brew will make things worse. Alcohol inhibits antidiuretic hormone production, so you will lose liquid, vitamins and minerals. Dehydration can lower your blood plasma volume, which means it takes longer for oxygenated blood to reach your organs. The booze also taxes your heart, and slows down your metabolism.

Your heart rate is affected, too. Alcohol changes your blood pressure because it reduces the heart's ability to pump blood efficiently: too high and it strains your heart; too low and you reduce blood flow to muscles.

According to Whoop—a wearable fitness tracker that monitors strain, recovery and sleep, among other metrics—heart rate variability (the time between your

Image: Michael Waraksa

PRIME B
BEST QUALITY
BREW CO.
CABERNET SAUVIGNON
NA BEER

> “One drink can affect your reaction time for up to five days.”

heartbeats that fluctuates marginally) is one of the best metrics to understand cardiovascular fitness. It's ideal to have a higher rate variability (HRV) and lower resting heart rate (RHR).

The company has seen that, on average, for every drink its users consume, their resting heart rate increases 1.3 b.p.m. Also, their HRV decreases an average of 2.4 milliseconds.

That's just a little "taste" of alcohol's immediate issues. Recovery is another matter. "Because your blood sugar is not normal, which is the primary fuel for the brain, you have muscle endurance issues because you have glycogen storage issues. The next time you exercise, you're going to be in trouble," says Dr. Dan Benardot, a professor emeritus from Georgia State University and a professor of practice in the Center for the Study of Human Health at Emory University.

Also, alcohol affects the absorption of vitamin B, a nutrient that helps muscle movement. Reaction time is imperative for cyclists, whether you're a roadie drafting behind your mate, or a mountain biker launching off a drop. According to a 2000 study, "Alcohol and the Athlete," published in *Sports Medicine*, "alcohol consumption also appears to have a causative effect in sports related injury, with an injury incidence of 54.8 per cent in drinkers compared with 23.5 per cent in non-drinkers."

"One drink can affect your reaction time for up to five days," Dr. Benardot says.

But the real harm to recovery, especially when it comes to repairing your muscles, occurs while you're sleeping. Alcohol disrupts all of your sleep cycles. According to Whoop, 95 per cent of growth hormone is produced during slow-wave sleep, the deepest stage of sleep. Growth hormone makes new proteins, the building blocks of muscles. A tip: if you're going to have that post-ride drink, have it sooner than later. It takes between four and five hours for that chemical to metabolize out of your system.

For those of us older than 50, alcohol's effects are intensified. "You get a degradation in tissue function as you age and anything that negatively impacts tissue function would be exacerbated with alcohol," Dr. Benardot says. The tissue membranes are hardening, thus reducing flow of oxygen to our muscles and organs. Alcohol also makes it harder to absorb nutrients, and remove waste.

So, you have to ask, do you really want to sacrifice the quality of our ride just for a few pints? Many are saying it's not worth it.

"We're seen a huge push on health in general," says Jesse Roberts, owner of Firehall Kitchen and Tap in Cranbrook, B.C. The movement, or trend, depending on how you look at it, began two years ago, but Roberts says it "hit turbo boost in the past 12 months."

In September, Firehall's sister brewery, Encore Brewing, began producing its first non-alcoholic (NA) beverage: Hop Water is a carbonated drink with hop flavour. "The

Images: Michael Waraksa

craft beer world was never really about overconsumption. Someone might drink 12 Budweisers in a night, but not 12 craft beers," Roberts says. "People care more about the taste and the specific notes, and even the memories of gathering with friends after a ride."

According to a survey by market researcher NIQ, the NAs are the fastest growing sector of the U.S. adult beverage market. Non-alcoholic beer, wine and liquor sales increased by 32 per cent from 2022 to 2023, while total alcohol sales grew by just one per cent. Another report says that Generation Z (born 1997 to 2012) is consuming 20 per cent less booze than millennials did at the same age.

But the NA movement is driven by other factors, too. "Everyone has less disposable income at the moment: a hop water is $4 rather than $8 for a pint," Roberts says. But ultimately, he thinks the mental-health benefits of a post-ride brew, alcoholic or not, need to be balanced against the purely biological effects. "It doesn't matter which beverage you choose, just go out with friends. Hopefully you're holding something in your glass feeling connected to something," he says. The NA movement, Roberts adds, is more inclusive. Those riders who didn't drink in the first place are now coming out to the bar. There isn't the pressure to drink as much anymore.

At Strange Fellows Brewing in East Vancouver, co-owner Aaron Jonckheere finds that many riders aren't too keen on the taste of NAs. But give it time, he says. NAs are still in their infancy. "It took three years to learn how to make our NA shelf-stable," he says. All beer degrades over time, but he adds, NAs are more susceptible.

To date, there are two methods for making NA beer, which can have as much as 0.5 per cent alcohol by volume. The larger breweries, like Budweiser, remove the alcohol after the beer has been made, which is expensive, says Jonckheere. Craft breweries typically stop the fermentation process before the sugar converts to alcohol.

Two years ago, Strange Fellows began brewing its first NAs. The first was a pale ale called Nevertheless. An IPA by the same name followed. At the 2023 B.C. Beer Awards, the pale ale was honoured alongside alcoholic beers in the specialty category. Today, the NAs are Strange Fellows's fourth and fifth best-selling drinks.

Johanna Weintrager, a guide for Ride the Earth, Bicycle Adventures and Sacred Rides bike touring companies, has noticed the drift away from drink. "I had one tour where nobody drank alcohol," she says. "People realize how performance and mind clarity changes. There's a better ability to get up early and enjoy the places we stay. When I first started in the early 2000s, alcohol was part of the ride. After you always went to a pub, before races, after races, driving shuttles between laps and parking-lot beers."

Today, she says guides focus on stretching and hydration post ride. There are still the post-ride beverages, but drinks now include more vitamin waters, NAs and hop waters. But she's not throwing out the beers and the wine just yet. They still have a place. "There are nights when we get nice bottles of wine. It makes it more special and alcohol becomes a treat not a need or a habit," she says.

It might just be that alcohol is going the way of tobacco. In 2026, Ireland is planning to add warning labels on alcohol bottles. Will we heed the call? During my night in Mexico in 2011, my group bonded, shared stories. We all let down our guard. It was special, but if a similar situation came up today, I wouldn't go so overboard. Hangovers are antiquated and sleep is too precious. One frosty beer on special occasions is enough for me. Maybe those Gen Zs are onto something.

How Victoria Lost, and Then Found, its Way with Mountain Biking

Decades ago, the B.C. capital was on its way to becoming an MTB centre. Then, trail development languished. Today, the riding in the region is starting to show the promise that always seemed to be there

by **Ryan Stuart**

Langford, B.C.

There's no easy way of topping Mount Manuel Quimper on a bike. For most mortals, including my ebiking buddy, the Vancouver Island peak and the high point of the Harbourview Trail Network, requires more than a little hike-a-bike. But it's worth the grunt. From the rounded rocky summit, I look down on Sooke Harbour, across the ocean to Washington State and over the hills at the Victoria city skyline.

The main reward though is the descent. We start on the Arbutus Trail, hopscotching from steep rock rolls to open mossy meadows, zipping between red-bark arbutus trees, bouncing down slabby chutes and committing to a natural rock-wall ride. Around every corner there's another slam-on-the-brakes view across the ocean to the mountains.

"It's got to be one of the most scenic places I've ever ridden," says Seamus McGrath, one of my companions and a former national team mountain biker.

Near the end of the trail, I slide down a final rock face onto an immaculate dirt apron, which feeds me into a slalom course of banked corners. I feel like I'm skiing through a glade of Douglas fir trunks and sword fern fronds, back and forth across the fall line.

This is not the Harbourview I visited a decade before. Back then the views were still stellar, but the trails were

Photo: Dave Silver

Geoff Kabush rides Victoria trails in 2004

janky, unmaintained and often loose, bouldery nightmares. Harbourview's unsanctioned status was the status quo for most of the riding in the Victoria area for much of the past 20 years.

Despite the city's reputation as Canada's cycling capital and its home to the national mountain bike team, the sanctioned mountain biking in the region was limited and stagnant. While mountain biking boomed just up the highway in Duncan and Cumberland and on the B.C. mainland in North Vancouver and Squamish, bureaucracy and red tape left Victoria's knobby tired community lapping one small trail network right next to the city's landfill site.

As the immaculate, new berms on Arbutus show, things are changing. The mountain bike clubs who spun for decades with little reward are suddenly enjoying forward progress. For the first time in years, mountain bikers are optimistic about the future.

"Where we're at now, we should have been 20 years ago," McGrath says. "It was a long and painful process to get here."

THE WILD weST

The early knobby-tire fans rode whatever singletrack they could find. Around Victoria, trails were just about everywhere. The city and its suburbs of Colwood, Langford, Sooke, Saanich and north to Sidney were surrounded by rocky hills and pocket valleys, laced with old logging roads, hiking trails and dirt biking tracks. The mountain biking potential was endless.

It was Yury Kashirin, a Russian road cyclist, who made the city synonymous with the national mountain bike team. In the early 1990s, he became a head coach at Cycling Canada and moved the team to Victoria to take advantage of its mild climate. Rather than migrate south to the United States to train year-round, aspiring pros could just head to the West Coast. McGrath was one of them. He first rode in Victoria during a national team training camp in December 1995.

"It opened my eyes to the opportunities," McGrath remembers. "It was neat to ride in this green, lush, mossy forest instead of cold, icy Ontario. And the trails were awesome."

When McGrath finished high school, he moved to Victoria, joining a generation of Canadian mountain bike champions and Olympians, including Geoff Kabush, Roland Green, Andreas Hestler, Catharine Pendrel and Kiara Bisaro.

The Capital Regional District (CRD) manages most of the parkland in the Victoria area. Hartland, a trail network right next to Victoria's landfill, was the only official mountain biking area. But the mountain bikers didn't stay at The Dump, McGrath remembers. "With the mileage we were riding, we quickly rode out Hartland," he says. "We rode everywhere and there were incredible trails through all of it."

The riding options were nearly limitless. They pieced together daylong loops up the Saanich Peninsula, out to Sooke and back, or up the Malahat. Much of it cut through vast tracts of private land, BC Parks, regional district

Photo: John Gibson

Kabush in 2004

The early knobby-tire fans rode whatever singletrack they could find. Around Victoria, trails were just about everywhere.

Sooke, B.C.

parks and even around the protected watershed, the source of Victoria's drinking water. None of it allowed mountain biking, but no one seemed to care.

"There were so few mountain bikers back then there wasn't much awareness or regulation," says Geoff Kabush. "It was the unregulated Wild West. We had the freedom to ride wherever we wanted."

Eventually, the mood started to shift. By the early 2000s Kabush started avoiding a CRD parks office around Prospect Lake, so the employees wouldn't give him a hard time. The CRD barred access to the restricted watershed area with an impenetrable fence. There was the odd run-in with a hiker. Kabush remembers someone's dad built trails in Partridge Hills, inside a provincial park just north of Hartland, and got in a lot of trouble. (BC Parks and the CRD were approached for comment. Both agencies declined to be interviewed about mountain biking.)

Steadily, the amount of enforcement increased. It slowed the mountain bikers and trail building, but didn't stop either. Development, though, was a tougher obstacle to bunny hop.

THE ROGUE OLD DAYS

I can see the line. I'm just not sure I want to ride it. I'm on the flank of Skirt Mountain, a pinnacle of rock rolls, grassy clearings and expansive city views right above the City of Langford. It's just the biggest in a series of drops that has taken me off the peak. As with the others, I finally suck up the courage, commit, lean back and hold on. It's over in seconds, and I zip out the bottom and through the woods, adrenalin pushing me on, right up until I come to a construction sign. Ahead of me is a wasteland of blast rock and partially finished homes, the next phase of Bear Mountain Resort Community. Behind me is one of the last rogue trails in the area.

Skirt and Bear Mountains are part of a rugged plateau of rock outcrops, open meadows, and Douglas fir and arbutus forest on the northern outskirts of Langford. It was the heart of the mountain biking network in Kabush and McGrath's early days in the city. Both rave about the punchy, physical climbs and technical, steep descents. "It was gnarly riding," McGrath says. "You really had to work for it, and that was exactly what we were into."

But Victoria's suburbs were growing fast. The land

Photos: John Gibson, Dave Silver

owners, a mix of BC Parks, the municipalities and property developers had different reactions to the riders. The government agencies had to consider all the users and possible uses of the land. Mountain biking never made it to the top of the list. The private developers ignored the mountain bikers and their trail work, and that included when it came time to build.

The first big hit was Bear Mountain.

In the early 2000s, a developer began construction of a golf course resort, blasting out the rock drops and bulldozing the forest, taking out most of the trail network in the process. Condos and homes, fairways and greens came next. A few years later, the same happened just south of Hartland. Every year it seemed a trail disappeared under another new neighbourhood.

At the same time, Victoria riders were watching what seemed like every other town and city in B.C. invest in trail networks, hoping to attract mountain bike tourists. In Cumberland, the mountain bike club signed a land use agreement with two forestry companies. Elsewhere, clubs raised millions of dollars for trail development.

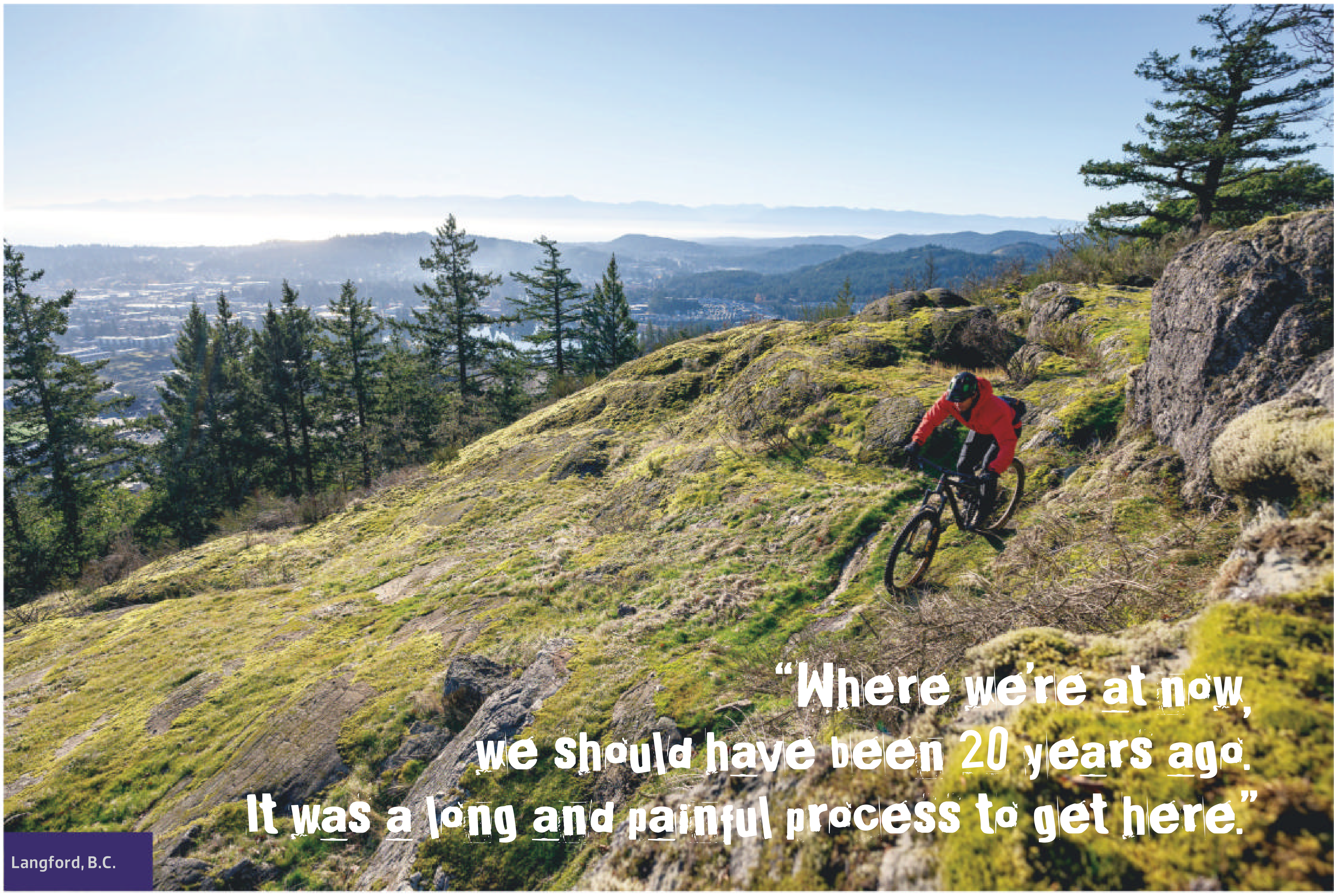
Still, mountain bikers were moving to Victoria. Many of the top freeride and downhill riders chose the University of Victoria because of its proximity to the excellent riding in the Cowichan Valley, less than two hours away.

There was also an underground scene that was making its way onto the world stage. A lot of it surrounded Jordie Lunn. He grew up in Langford, BMX and mountain biking racing. He eventually found his niche in freeride and became one of the top athletes, winning contests and filming all over the world.

Jordie went on to become a professional trail builder, designing singletrack, bike parks and hosting events. After Bear Mountain's first phase of development, the resort even hired him to build trails around the golf course, including a cross country race track and jump lines. Tragically, Jordie died in a mountain bike crash in 2019, just as Victoria's trail fortunes were shifting.

Sooke, B.C.

Photos: Dave Silver



Langford, B.C.

“Where we're at now, we should have been 20 years ago. It was a long and painful process to get here.”

SMOOTH SHIFTING

The Berm Reynolds trail, at Langford's new bike park, is as good an example as any of that change. The rollout builds speed for a couple of quick berms that fire me over the hillside's edge and into a back and forth pinball, each switchback redirected by a G-force banked corner. It's fast, fun and just the kind of modern flow trail everyone loves.

It's also the kind of maintenance-heavy and high-risk trail that would never have been approved by land managers in the area in the past. As such, it's a sign of Victoria's embrace of fat-tire fun and, even more, a testament to years of patient, hard work.

Most of the credit should go to the South Island Mountain Bike Society (SIMBS). Founded in 1998, it's one of the oldest mountain bike clubs in the province, but, until recently, it was only allowed to work at Hartland. At times over the years, the CRD even revoked the club's maintenance agreement. And many overtures to expand the trail network or sanction a new area were repeatedly turned down.

Brendon Earl, the current president, says dedicated members dealt with the frustrations by doing what mountain bikers do when faced with a long climb: they just put their heads down and kept spinning.

"We did a fair bit of advocacy," he says. "We worked to get in the public eye and change the stigma of mountain bikers. We showed that mountain biking can align with conservation and recreation goals and coexist with other users."

It helped that membership in the club was growing fast—up to 50 per cent a year during the pandemic—and that interest in recreation was exploding even before that.

SIMBS's resilience started paying off in 2019, when the CRD commissioned an advisory group to report on the state of mountain bike opportunities in the region.

As a longtime Victoria resident, Jon Watkin wasn't going to wait for the CRD's study. Plus, he already knew what he wanted.

He and his business partners in Panache Cycling Sports Co., had been organizing bike races and festivals in the Victoria area for years. But as the events grew in size, the group was struggling to find places to host them.

At the same time the City of Langford was embracing sport tourism. Watkin saw an opportunity. He helped to develop a proposal for a bike park and presented it to Langford council. The mayor jumped on it and stepped it up.

In addition to the proposed pump track, skills area, jump line and cyclocross trails, a clubhouse and a enduro-style trail network on the adjacent hillside was added to the plan. The City of Langford provided the land, an initial $1.4-million build budget, plus ongoing maintenance. When Jordie Lunn died, the local kid was the obvious namesake.

"Jordie was always really invested in the community and getting kids into the sport," says Craig Lunn. "He had a huge impact on B.C. mountain biking and riding in Langford."

The Jordie Lunn Bike Park opened in 2020. The Gravity Zone, the neighbouring trail network, opened a year later. Along with the skills park and pump track, there's now three climbing trails and six descents, including Berm Reynolds, plus the clubhouse is home to a pop-up bike shop, a coffee shop and

JORDIE LUNN BIKE PARK
CITY OF LANGFORD

Langford
GRAVITY ZONE
& NATURE TRAILS
USE AT YOUR OWN RISK - THIS PARK IS UNSUPERVISED
IN CASE OF EMERGENCY - DIAL 911
Bike Park Map
Trail Difficulty
BEGINNER
INTERMEDIATE
ADVANCED
EXPERT
About Langford Gravity Zone and Nature Trails
Bike Park Rules & Etiquette
Park Hours:
Dawn to Dusk
Langford

Langford, B.C.

Photos: Dave Silver

the offices for Cycling Canada and Cycling BC.

"It's insane and mind-boggling what it has become," Watkin says. "Credit goes to Langford for taking what we started and evolving it into something incredible."

Another victory was in the works in Sooke.

Mountain bikers had ridden on the slopes of Manuel Quimper since the early 2000s, and for almost as long, the Sooke Bike Club had been trying to take an active role in maintenance. Eventually the club changed tactics. Rather than asking to take over from the CRD and manage all of the Harbourview Trail Network, it asked for permission to fix one trail.

"We were rewarded with little wins," says Ethan Wigley, the club's president. "We started to clean up the trails, making them more sustainable. Basically we showed the CRD that we would do what they asked."

The patient improvements built trust, which steadily added up. In January 2021, the CRD sanctioned the Harbourview trails and signed an agreement with the club to maintain the entire network.

Around the same time, the CRD's mountain bike advisory committee reported back. "The committee believes that deliberate efforts should be taken to increase the supply and diversity of purpose-built mountain bike optimized trails," it said in its report.

The CRD parks board approved a plan to consider mountain biking in its land acquisition process going forward. It hasn't resulted in any new trails or riding areas yet, but Brendon Earl from SIMBS says everyone is at least pedalling in the same direction now.

And finally in 2023, after a decade of talk, BC Parks approved multi-use trails in the Partridge Hills area of Gowlland Tod Provincial Park, investing $500,000 in the improvements and handing the maintenance over to SIMBS.

NEW REPUTATION

The shift adds up. Five years ago, there was some technical riding and lots of flat, wide paths, but very little in between. The one dedicated mountain bike network, Hartland, had 47 km of trails. Now there are four sanctioned zones with more than 100 km of trails. That's still small compared with Cumberland or Squamish, but Victoria leapfrogged both with its mix that includes everything from super easy to a Darren Berrecloth-designed, double-black jump line.

"The level of progression is unparalleled on the Island now," says Craig Lunn. "Ebikes, kids, people of any age can get comfortable here and take those skills to bigger mountain bike networks."

Goldstream Bicycles in Langford has noticed an increase in new riders and definitely more kids getting into cycling in recent years.

"The big benefit is when the city and politicians see how successful the Jordie park is," says Bailey Avenue, Goldstream's general manager. "It shows how beneficial it is to work with the mountain bike community overall."

He hopes that will translate to sanctioning some of the remaining rogue trails that haven't disappeared under construction zones in Langford and beyond.

Whether that happens or not, Victoria's reputation as a mountain biking city has been renewed. The trails have never been busier. Events are selling out. Shops are bustling.

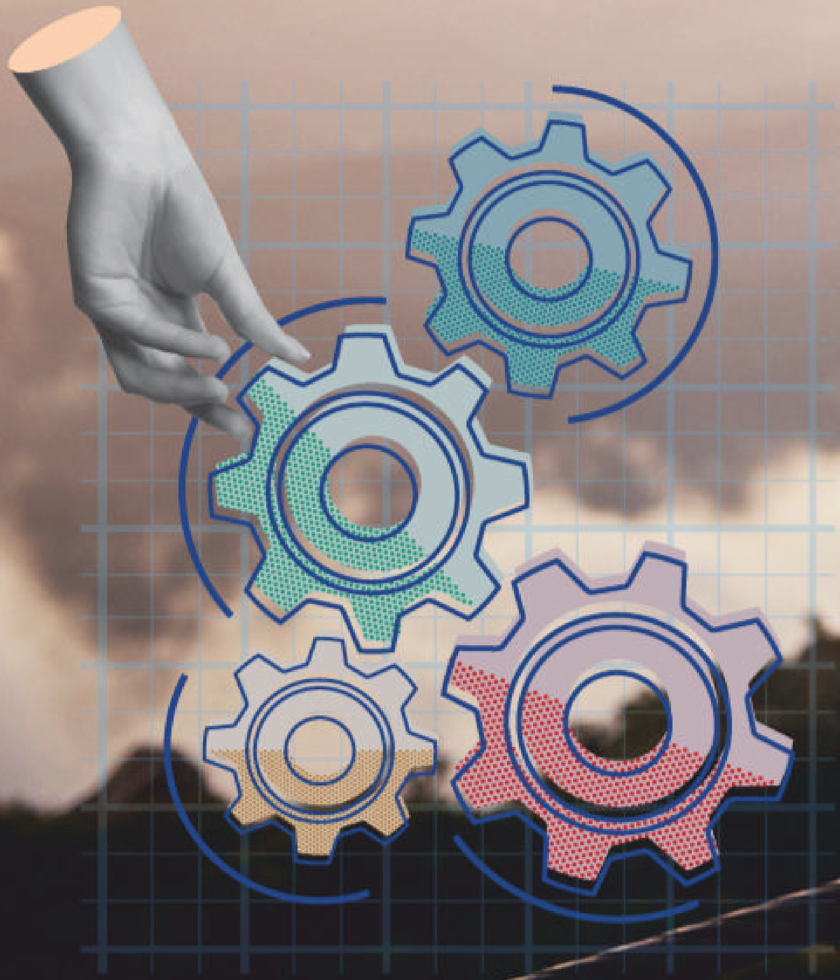
But maybe the most telling sign of all is what's coming in 2025. For the first time ever, the city will host the national mountain bike championships.

Sooke , B.C.

Set YOUR 2025 CYCLING GOALS with 15 Essential Questions

The answers you find will guide you to a season of successes

by **Molly Hurford**



It's time, once again, to set your cycling goals for the upcoming year. If you're feeling like you've been stuck in a rut, not making any improvements, or just feeling a little "meh" about doing the same races again this year, you've come to the right place. Here, pro cyclists, coaches and mental-performance experts present the right questions you should ask yourself to help you set your goals.

I recommend reading through all of the questions first. Then choose the few that spoke to you (or the ones that you truly want to avoid answering). Pull out your journal or start a fresh Google doc and start answering. The race schedule or cycling goal may not appear instantly. Instead, you may find that as you answer more of the questions and dig into things like your true cycling "why," what type of riding really feels fun, and what you've been missing in your bike life, the goals you thought you would choose aren't the right ones after all. You just might just surprise yourself.

Let's get started.

1 What's your 'why?'

Honing in on your "why" is a cliché for a reason: it works. "Your cycling 'why' is what you're thinking about as you're pursuing that goal," says mountain biker and mental-performance consultant Sonya Looney. "Maybe you're trying to ride 100 miles to raise money for a charity that you really care about, or to inspire other people so that they can do the same. Consider what the impact of your goal outside of yourself is, because that generates a different set of emotions. Thinking about how it could impact other people is going to help you have a greater sense of purpose." Looney, who is based in Squamish, adds that the "why" doesn't have to be grandiose, and can be more self-focused—staying fit to enjoy spending time with your grandkids or to travel to far-flung race destinations because that's what you love to do.

2 How did last year go, schedule-wise?

Before you can look ahead to 2025, you do need to ask yourself a few critical questions about the past year and the goals you had set. Downhiller and enduro racer Rachel Pageau is a big fan of looking back to look ahead. She has a set of prompts that she runs through. Did you follow your race schedule? How many races were removed or added? Why? Often, busy adults who are balancing cycling goals with life and work struggle to hit a long list of races or varied fitness goals. Then, they forget that 20 races is too many races when planning for next season. Pull out your 2024 calendar if you need a refresher on how the past year played out.

3

Why did you or why didn't you hit last season's goals?

"At the end of the season, I will go over my goals and ask myself why they were achieved or why they weren't," says mountain biker Sean Fincham. "There are often a bunch of different reasons that include fitness, overall health, scheduling and motivation. I like to look at times when I was at my best in racing or training and see how that was achieved—but I also make sure I look at the races that didn't go well so I know what to work on for the next season."

4

What was I missing this past year?

Let your FOMO rule for a minute. This question can and should go all over the place: it can be about your fitness, your social rides, your cycling community and even (dare we say it) goals outside of cycling that you put to the side to chase your gravel-grinding dream. You can be granular—looking at your top-end sprint, for instance—or more macro, such as thinking about your lack of consistency on the bike. It can also be about your more global relationship with sport—are you feeling like you didn't have a lot of group rides with friends, race days, community events? While this list shouldn't then translate into your bucket list for the coming year, you may notice broader themes: maybe most of what you missed was community-based, in which case, your 2025 goals should reflect that overarching desire.

5

What inspires you for next year?

Olympic medallist and mountain bike coach Catharine Pendrel is a fan of starting from a place of inspiration. She asks her athletes to list positives such as, "What was good? What are you proud of? What were the gains you made? What inspires you for next year?" Your inspiration could be an amazing adventure ride a friend did in Europe, a gravel race that looked like a ton of fun, or heck, maybe watching track cycling at the Olympics has inspired you to head to the velodrome.

Sometimes when we're reflecting, it's easy to get sucked into a negative thought spiral, so if you find that's the case for you, make sure you're using these more positive-focused questions.

6

What could add more fun?

When goal-setting for 2025, don't constrain yourself to fitness goals or race-based goals. Consider things in cycling that are outside of your FTP or the podium in your age group, like volunteering with a local club or going on at least one adventure with a few friends. We often get too caught up in the numbers and race days, and forget to plan the fun stuff that makes us feel like kids playing on bikes until we hear a parent yell that dinner's ready.

7

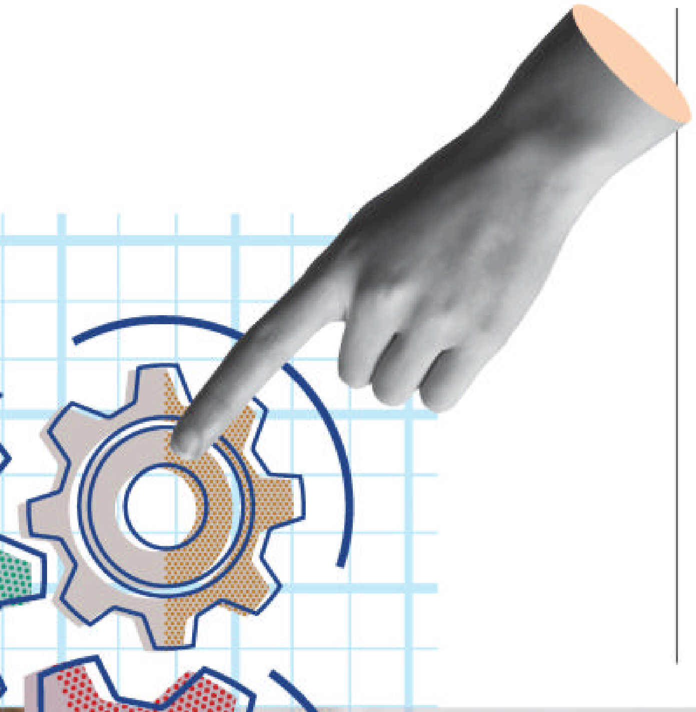
Why am I doing these specific races?

Assuming you already have a few races or adventures in mind for next season, it's time to get granular. This question is a bit more specific than identifying your overall "why" for cycling. Here, Sonya Looney wants you to get into the nitty-gritty of your "why" for every race you're contemplating targeting in 2025. "Ask yourself, why am I doing this?" she says. "Am I picking this because it's something that I've always done? Am I picking this because it's something somebody else thinks is a good idea? What energy am I bringing to this?" You may realize that there are a few races that you do out of habit, but that no longer make sense with your current life goals or overarching aims for cycling.

8

Are there expectations you need to shift for the coming season?

"Stress is stress, and you have to consider how all of the things in your life are affecting you," Looney says. "For example, I'm a professional mountain biker racing some very big races. I was training eight hours a week the whole 2024 race season because I was working on a master's degree and I have two little kids. I just don't have the energy I did in past years. Now, I have different priorities, which means shifting my expectations around the goal. I think that a lot of people think that the amount of training hours per week is the total amount of stress on the body. But if you're super busy, that takes away from your energy, and you have to count that the same way you would count an interval workout because it's going to deplete you."



9 Which races or goals aren't a priority?

Looking at your new goal list and calendar of events you're hoping to do in 2025, take one last look to see if you should drop any events or goals from your roster to make it more likely that you'll hit the ones you do want to prioritize. "I think the biggest thing was trying to decide what races interested me most and making a list of priorities. I could race almost every weekend, but then my performance would suffer," Fincham says. "I always like to incorporate blocks for training and rest periods so I can build toward the important goals. Now, I know that I often need to trim down my initial race schedule."

10 Does your 2025 goal scare you a little bit?

"Doing an event that you've never done before, trying a distance you've never done before—those are scary, but they are also more fulfilling because you're pushing yourself past the familiar," Looney says. "That's psychological richness. Whenever you do something that's novel, it changes your perspective of what you're capable of." Something novel doesn't need to be trying an entirely new type of cycling in a faraway destination: it could look like trying

to improve your technical skills so you can ride the entirety of a certain mountain bike course, or going up to the longer distance in a gravel race. Looney adds that your goal should be one that feels right for you, rather than something you're doing simply because a friend is doing it or you think it'll make for an impressive Strava post.

11 What does moving forward look like?

Whether you're contemplating a racing goal or a fitness-focused one, figuring out your action steps can be tricky. "I ask myself a series of questions about moving forward," says national cross country and marathon champion Jenn Jackson. "Why do I need to move forward? What do I need in order to move forward? What do I need to do to move forward? When does this need to happen? The combination of stating what you need to do is important to identify the goal, and the explanation of why gives you purpose for it—it's a great combination of practical and reflective questions."

12 What are the small daily actions I need to hit my goals?

Getting even more granular, you can take what you thought about when considering the moving-forward question and get more specific. "What do you think you need to get there and how will we do that?" Pendrel asks. "I think the 'how' part is the piece that can be forgotten, but all the small achievable goals—training consistency, sleep habits, time management—we work on everyday to achieve the bigger goals are actually the most important pieces." (This question can also push you back to the previous question of whether or not you actually want to do the work required to hit your goal—and it's OK to rethink your goal anytime in this process.)

13 Can you prepare for the big goal you're considering?

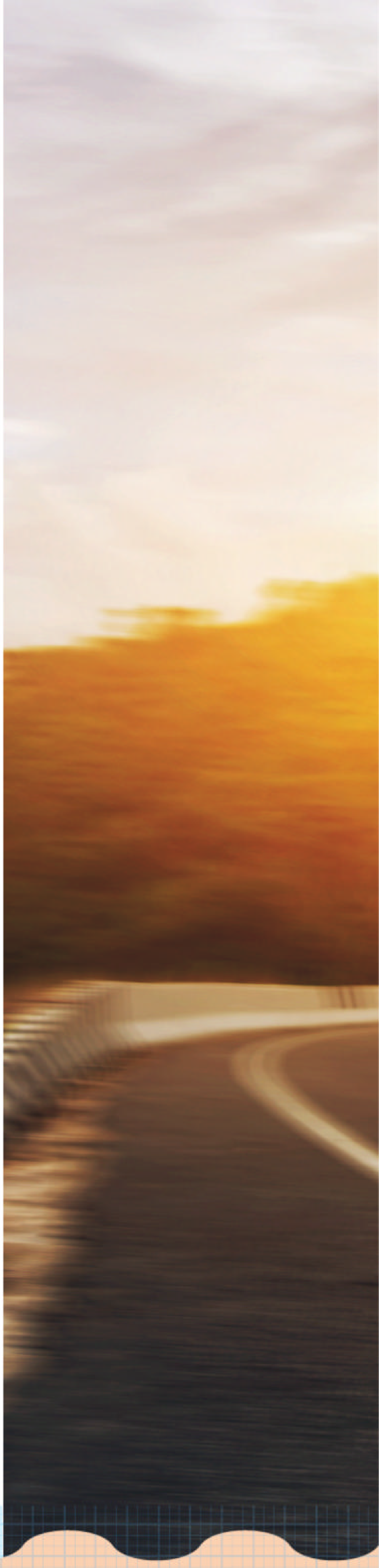
When you pick the race that you want to do—and maybe it's a little scary or intimidating—and before you hit Register Now, consider what it will mean for your day-to-day and week-to-week training. "A race may sound cool, but what will the daily actions look like?" Looney asks. "The goal might look shiny and cool, but the actual nuts and bolts of the goal may not actually work with your current lifestyle. That may be something you're willing or able to change, but for a lot of us, we only have so many free hours in the week and we can't actually do the training necessary for the goal. I think people tend to sign up for things without thinking about that, and then they're like, 'Oh, now I have to do all this training, and I don't have time to do this stuff.' And then they either give up on it and then lose integrity with themselves, or they're roped into something that they don't want to do that they can't prepare for properly."

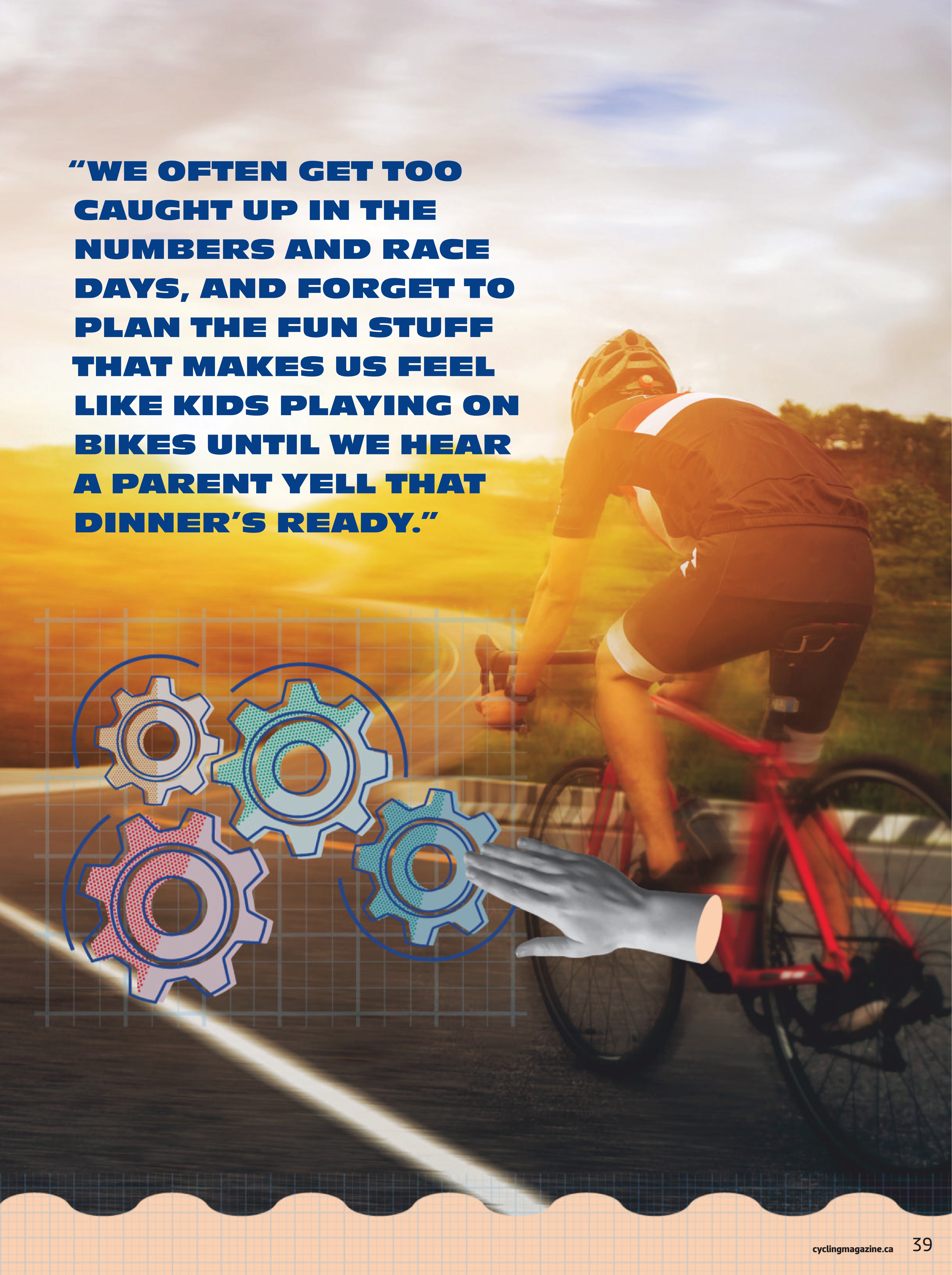
14 Do you actually want to prepare for the goal?

Arguably, the more important corollary to the previous question is "do you actually want to do the preparation for this goal?" For example, coach Peter Glassford often hears from city-based cyclists who prefer racing weekly crits and doing their weekday rides on the trainer who also want to take on Leadville 100 MTB. Can they prepare for it? Absolutely—if they commit to driving to trailheads on weekends, getting on the mountain bike more often, and getting out of town to do big climbs whenever possible. It's doable, but if they love the crit series and find the trainer incredibly convenient in their busy lives, they may not actually want to prepare for Leadville. The idea of crossing the finish line sparks joy, but the day-to-day grind of getting ready for the race may not.

15 How can I savour my cycling?

Finally, goals should be a net positive in your life. The process goals of putting in the training miles every day should feel good—even on the hard days. Looney's final question is, "How can you savour your goals throughout the year?" She explains that most people do not take the time to enjoy their goals or the process. "But being able to savour your small goals on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, to celebrate those things along the way, ultimately makes the goal more meaningful, and also helps you if you don't attain the outcome at the end, because you'll remember all the things that you accomplished leading up to the goal."





“WE OFTEN GET TOO CAUGHT UP IN THE NUMBERS AND RACE DAYS, AND FORGET TO PLAN THE FUN STUFF THAT MAKES US FEEL LIKE KIDS PLAYING ON BIKES UNTIL WE HEAR A PARENT YELL THAT DINNER’S READY.”

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Argon 18 Equation

A quality carbon-fibre frame and fine components form something beyond entry-level

reviewed by **Matthew Pioro**

During my time reviewing the Argon 18 Equation, I took it on a short weekend escape away from my busy city. For two days, I was about 130 km west of Toronto on country roads where I could truly lose myself in my rides. The setting and the design of the bike seemed perfectly matched.

Before I got the Equation, I had been riding some aggressive road and gravel machines—all fun bikes, but ones that required a bit more from a rider, especially when it came to managing their fast handling. The Equation, Argon 18's new endurance bike that debuted early this past summer, has been designed with what an Argon 18 product manager described as "accessible and predictable" handling. On those country roads, it was just the kind of behaviour I wanted.

It might seem like I'm dancing around the word "slow," because I am. No one wants any part of their bike to be slow. Yet, the Equation's handling is just that: slower than that of a bike made for a pro. But on a ride through the country, a ride for pure fun as opposed to performance, predictable steering lets you get immersed in the moment more easily.

The fit of the Equation is similar to that of Argon 18's high-end endurance bike, the Krypton: more upright than the company's pure road racer, the Sum. The two endurance bikes also have similar forks, which add some vertical compliance and comfort to long rides. At a maximum of 32c, the Equation does have less tire clearance than the Krypton. The Equation's chainstays are longer for a more stable ride.

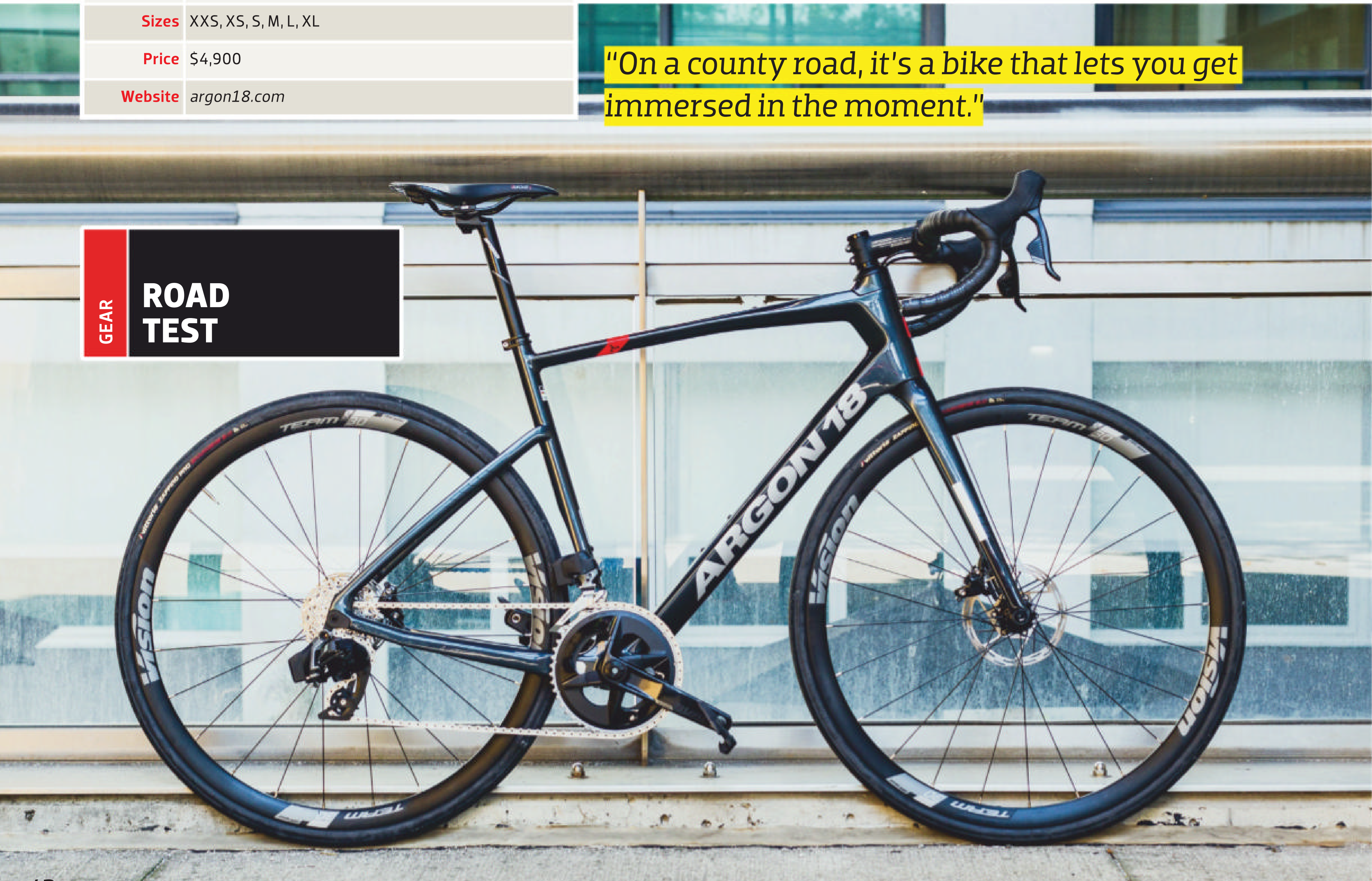
What strikes me about the Equation is the frame itself. It's carbon fibre, but it's not a formula after the biggest weight savings or aero gains, all at a high price. No, the designers of this bike had a goal as challenging as scrubbing grams and drag. They wanted to make a frame that performs well, at a decent price. That's a tough balancing act. I think they've done quite a good job at it. On my country rides, as well as jaunts on my regular routes, the bike performed well, letting me hit training targets and speeds I like to see.

I'd call this bike high-end entry-level. It's a bit contradictory, I know, but bear with me. The carbon-fibre layup is not the lightest, but it's good-quality. The Rival AXS, which is near the low-end of SRAM's wireless shifting lineup, is, well, still fancy robot shifting. The complete bike weighs 9.19 kg. If you wanted to cut some mass, a switch from the solid alloy wheels to a carbon set would be a transformative upgrade. I feel that this is a bike that could serve you for years with proper maintenance and well-considered component changes.

I like that Argon 18 has created a quality bike that sits in the low- to mid-range (There's also a mechanical Shimano 105 model at $3,650 and Tiagra model for $3,200.) It's an important category. If this is your first fast and fun road bike, it's a good one. You'll enjoy it for a long time.

Argon 18 Equation (as tested)	
Components	SRAM Rival AXS groupset with 48/35-tooth crankset and 12-speed, 10-30 tooth cassette, FSA Omega Compact handlebar and OS-167 Omega Pro stem, Repente Quasar saddle
Wheels	Vision Team 30 clincher wheels with 30c Vittoria Zaffiro tires
Sizes	XXS, XS, S, M, L, XL
Price	$4,900
Website	*argon18.com*

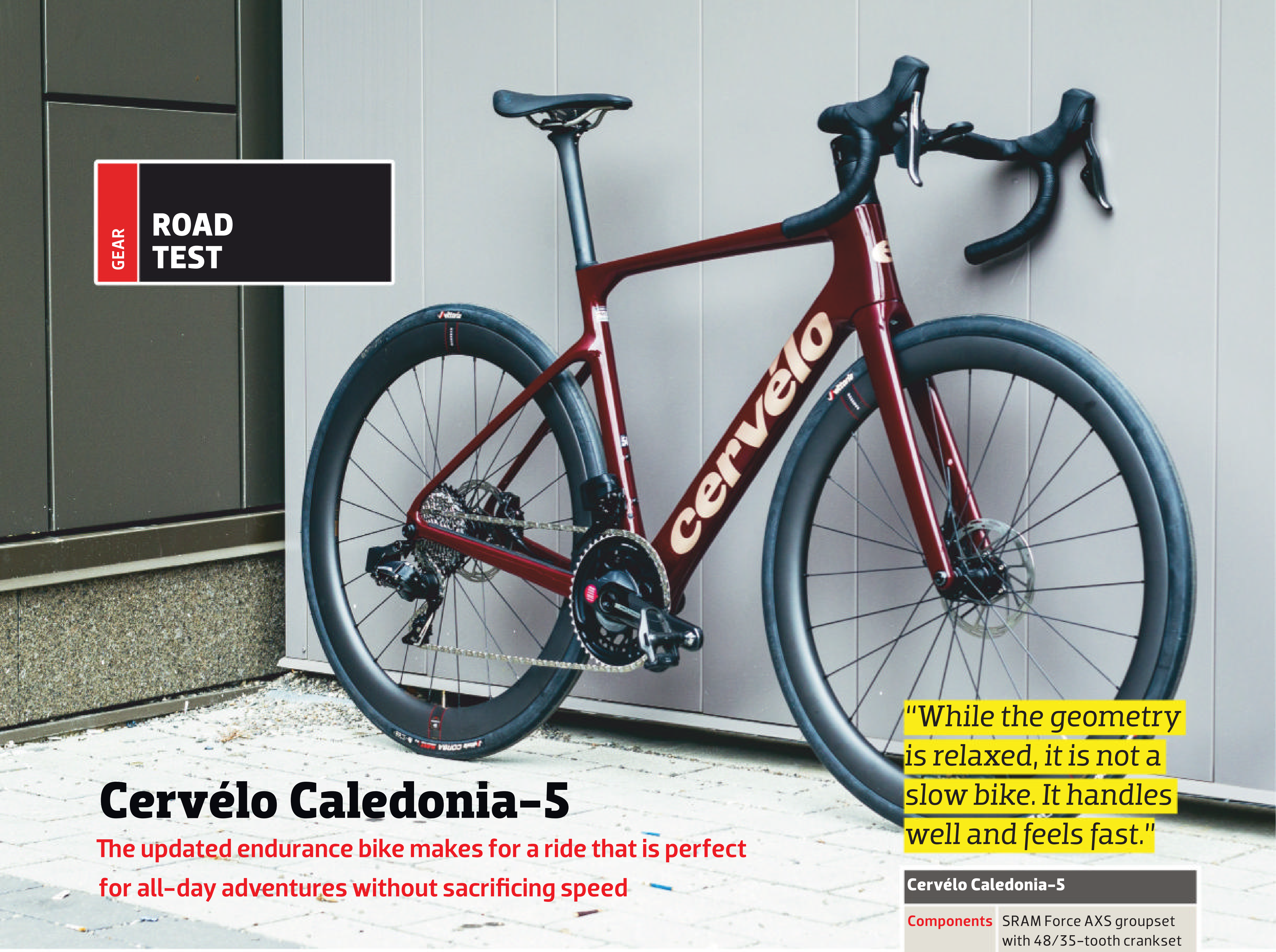
"On a county road, it's a bike that lets you get immersed in the moment."



GEAR ROAD TEST

GEAR

ROAD TEST



Cervélo Caledonia-5

The updated endurance bike makes for a ride that is perfect for all-day adventures without sacrificing speed

reviewed by **Matt Hansen**

I **spend a lot of my time on road bikes** with race geometry. Still, I was excited to test the new Cervélo Caledonia-5. I always find the first few rides on an endurance rig can feel quite different due to the relaxed geometry and higher stack height. Yet, I really started to dig it after a few rides. But what I also noticed immediately was the responsiveness and stiffness you'd expect from a Cervélo.

This all-road endurance bike is built for riders who want to go fast, but maybe don't have quite the flexible back they used to. If you're like me and love spending all day in the saddle, then you know what I mean. The Caledonia-5 debuted in 2020. The latest version, like its predecessor, keeps the relaxed geometry and speed. It handles well and feels fast.

After a few rides, I stopped noticing the higher Cervélo HB13 bars. Your hands feel a bit elevated on the drops relative to the frame, but I had no trouble navigating one of the few proper descents in the Greater Toronto Area. Sure, you wouldn't want to use this bike in a crit—but that's not its purpose. My test bike was equipped with SRAM Force AXS, which does the trick. It also comes with a power meter, a bonus. I even took the bike on a relatively quick group ride, where I was pleased to see that when I was doing efforts at my usual power, I was just as quick as if I was on my race bike.

There are a few added features compared with the previous iteration. While the most recent Cervélo Aspero comes with a top-tube bag, the Caledonia includes in-frame storage drawn from the company's P-Series tri bike. I always tend to pack a lot on rides—an extra vest or hat, snacks, plus my usual repair tools: pump or CO2 canister and tube. Being able to put things in the down tube means my jersey doesn't sag at the back. Accessing the storage is a breeze—and there's enough room for the multi-tool, tube and canister.

The Caledonia is not limited to smooth asphalt. It can fit 36-mm-wide tires and has fender mounts, so you're all set for light gravel rides or foul conditions. The dropped seatstays enhance comfort. Additionally, the down tube features increased stiffness, which you definitely notice when you're out of the saddle, whether climbing or sprinting.

The Reserve wheels feel fast. With a 42-mm rim depth in the front and 49 mm in the back, they give you a definite aero advantage, but they're not so deep that they get blown around in the wind.

After several rides on the Caledonia-5, I went back to my race bike. After a long ride on that rig, my familiar sore back returned. As with all our review bikes, they are just on temporary loan, but I would definitely like to have a Caledonia at home to mix up my training for those long, hard rides.

> "While the geometry is relaxed, it is not a slow bike. It handles well and feels fast."

Cervélo Caledonia-5	
Components	SRAM Force AXS groupset with 48/35-tooth crankset with power meter and 12-speed, 10–36 tooth cassette, Cervélo HB13 carbon handlebar, ST32 alloy stem, Selle Italia Novus Boost Evo Superflow Ti saddle
Wheels	Reserve 49 (rear) with 24.5-mm inner rim width, Reserve 42 (front) with 25.5-mm inner rim width, 30c Vittoria Corsa N.EXT tubeless tires
Sizes (cm)	48, 51, 54, 56, 58, 61
Price	$11,500
Website	*cervelo.com*

Photos: Matt Stetson

Forbidden Druid

The high-pivot trail bike mixes a balanced ride with lively handling

GEAR

TRAIL TEST

Forbidden Druid GX AXS RS S Plus	
Components	SRAM GX T-Type 12-speed wireless drivetrain with 10-52 tooth cassette. Four-piston SRAM Code Stealth Silver brakes, OneUp dropper post (120-mm S1, 150-mm S2, 180-mm S3, 210-mm S4), 800-mm Burgtec Ride Wide Enduro Alloy handlebar and 40-mm Forbidden stem
Suspension	RockShox SuperDeluxe Select+ shock with 130 mm travel, RockShox Lyrik Select+ fork with 150 mm travel
Wheels	Crankbrothers Synthesis Enduro Alloy wheels with 29 x 2.5 Maxxis Assegai EXO MaxxTerra front and 29 x 2.4 Maxxis Forekaster EXO+ MaxxTerra rear tires
Sizes	S1, S2, S3, S4
Price	$8,999 (as tested)
Website	*forbiddenbike.com*

> *"The Druid really does feel like it's doing something special on the trail, especially when the going gets rough and when traction is a rare commodity."*

reviewed by **Terry McKall**

Based out of the mountain bike haven of Cumberland, B.C., Vancouver Island's Forbidden Bikes pioneered the short-travel high-pivot trail bike long before the design was popular. In fact, the Druid, now in its second version, helped kick-start the rise of high-pivot designs beyond the world of gravity racing.

The V2 Druid gets a redesigned frame and suspension layout, but it is still a small-but-mighty 130-mm travel trail bike. Forbidden offers this carbon-fibre rig in 29" or MX setups, but always paired with a 150-mm fork.

While the high-pivot suspension and signature idler pulley may attract the most attention, there are plenty of features that make this boutique brand worth a deeper look. Forbidden adjusts the geometry, including rear center and head-tube length, across sizes so every rider gets the same ride experience. This geometry requires you to change chainstays to switch between MX and 29". While more involved than a flip-chip, this option maintains proper balance, and is lighter and stronger.

Forbidden's mix of short travel and not-too-extreme geometry is a potent alchemy. The Druid corners with remarkable confidence. That can be, in part, attributed to proper balance across the size range, including my S4 test frame, the largest in the lineup. The high pivot not only delivers impressive grip descending, it also does so while climbing. While this style of suspension can have a reputation for feeling dead on the trail, Forbidden's highly progressive suspension breaks that trend, keeping the Druid's handling crisp and animated in a way that makes carving corners fun.

While filling a review of a bike called the Druid with references to magic might seem lazy or campy, Forbidden earns any supernatural superlatives. It really does feel like it's doing something special on the trail, especially when the going gets rough and when traction is a rare commodity. Dabbling in the dark arts always seems to come with a trade-off, though. The Druid can't dodge paying for its fun factor in some way. Here, the piper collects in the form of a little drivetrain noise while pedalling if you're not religious about your post-ride maintenance. And, while the 130-mm rear suspension goes a long way, the Druid's spell over the trail does eventually run out. Hitting bigger features, or really missing your line, will give you a feel for the end of this frame's travel. Though the highly progressive suspension does soften the blow.

Those are the extreme ends, however, and the Druid will take you farther, more comfortably, than most bikes with comparable travel numbers. It's truly impressive how well the bike can handle rougher trails while still feeling spry and efficient enough for long days on the pedals. Even in challenging conditions, like chunder or drops into tight corners, the Druid smooths out the rough bits and then immediately digs in to carve into the turn. While the advanced suspension may seem more than what's needed on easier trails, the endless traction and progressive behaviour allows the Druid to earn more easy smiles than race-focused high-pivot designs.

Photo: Terry Mckall

Elite Avanti Smart Trainer

A small, powerful package with connectivity options galore

by **Matthew Pioro**

I was in a state of mild panic as I searched through the box. Elite had sent me its new smart trainer, the Avanti, for testing. In its box was the trainer itself, a power cable, a front-wheel block and some documentation. There was no cassette, but I knew that it only shipped with the Shimano freehub I had asked for. What I couldn't find were the axle adaptors: for quick-release or thru-axle. Adapters for Boost, Super Boost and some other axle standards are extra add-ons, but the 130–135 x 5 mm and 142 x 12 mm are supposed to be included. Had Elite forgotten to ship them to me?

Then I noticed a helpful yellow tag sticking out of the back of the trainer. "Open for adapters and brake-pad spacers," it read. There, in an elegant little drawer, was everything that I needed. Amazing. For such a high-tech piece of equipment, the first thing that really stuck me was a drawer. But if you've lost as many trainer parts as I have, you'll understand what a smart feature this is.

But onward to the truly cool stuff. In Elite's lineup of smart trainers, the Avanti, which came out in July, sits just below the top-end Justo 2. They share many of the same features. The Avanti, however, is a more compact machine. I like this powerful device that has a lesser footprint on my floor space.

Like the Justo 2, the Avanti uses Elite's most accurate power meter, the Optical Torque Sensor, however, the accuracy is a smidge less on the Avanti, but still impressive at ±1 per cent. Not too long ago, I had heard from a staff member at a pro team that Elite trainers tend to produce slightly higher power numbers than other devices. The team takes that into account when reviewing data from prospective riders. To be clear, applicants are not penalized. So, any future stars of cycling reading this, you can continue to train on an Elite trainer. I asked Elite about elevented numbers, and they pointed me to the consistency of their devices, which is really what's important. The world of power meters is quite variable from unit to unit, so consistency is what you want for your training.

The Avanti has all sorts of means to transmit data to external devices. Let's start with Bluetooth. I patched the trainer into my laptop easily. With the Fast Track feature, you can boost the transmission of power, speed and cadence information by 10 Hz over Bluetooth or TCP-IP. The latter requires Elite's dongle ($150) so you can wire the trainer directly into your router. You can also connect the trainer to your WiFi network. If your place has multiple networks, make sure Zwift and the Avanti are on the same one.

If you need to get your data to a device with connectivity limits (Apple TV, for example), the trainer and Elite's My E-Training app can help. You can bridge your heart-rate monitor to the trainer, so the HR data gets packaged with all the information coming from the Avanti. It worked well on my laptop for both Bluetooth and ANT+.

While the My E-Training app does let you manage all the features, I find its user experience could be better. When I'm in the app, I can't tell if the heart-rate monitor remains bridged or if it needs reconnecting. Some of the descriptions and guidance could be clearer. Still, the app gets the job done. It's not a showstopper for me. The trainer, the elegant and powerful package that it is, is the real star here.

Elite Avanti Smart Trainer	
Power meter accuracy	±1 per cent
Slope simulation	18 per cent
Maximum power resistance	920 W at 20 km/h, 2,100 W at 40 km/h
Flywheel	4 kg
Price	$1,099
Website	*elite-it.com*

AVANTI
ELITE

GEAR

IN DEPTH

> *"I like this feature-rich device that has a lesser footprint on my floor space."*

AVANTI
ELITE
ELITE

GEAR

IN DEPTH

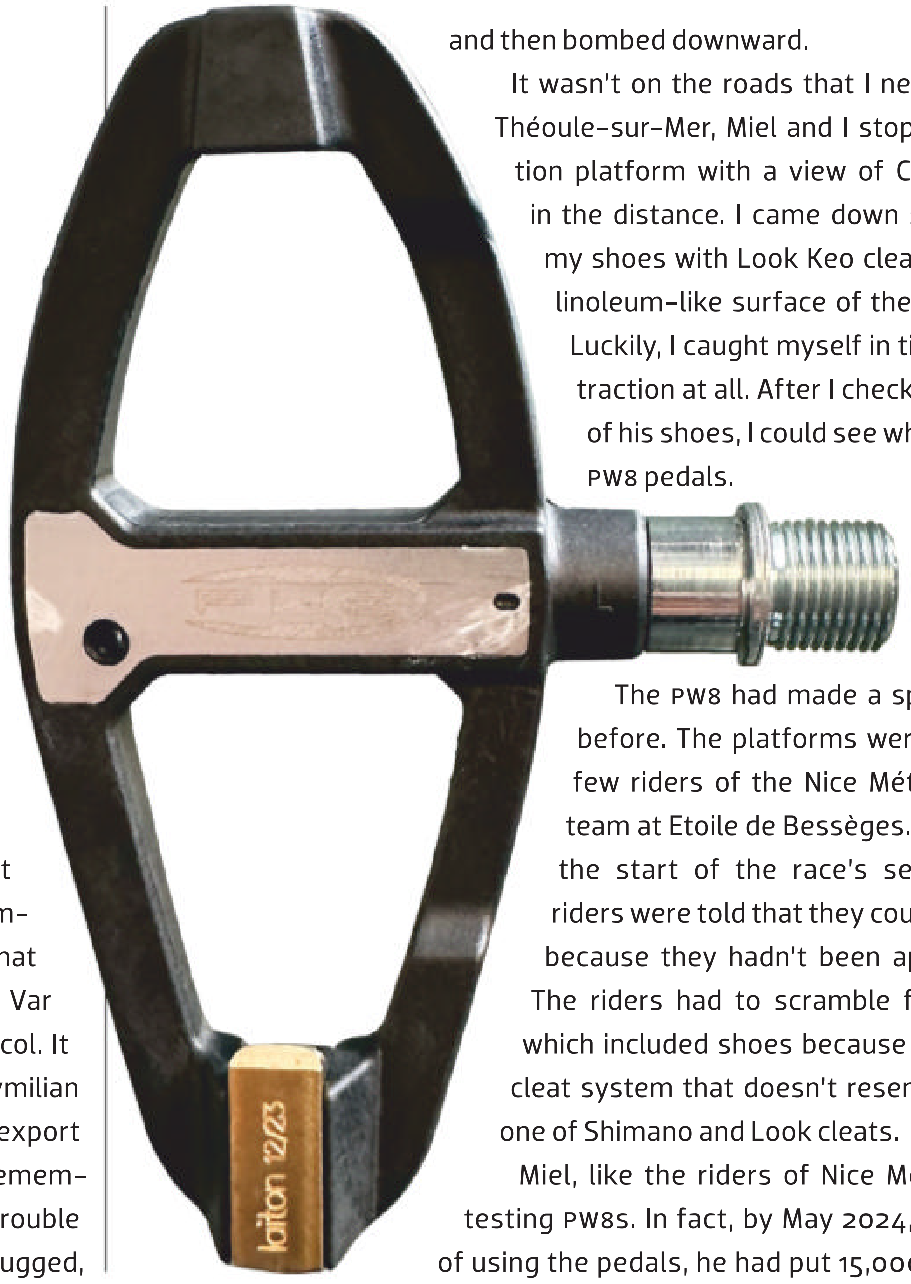
The Creation of a New Pedal

The PW8 are innovative, but will they find traction with riders?

by **Matthew Pioro**

"**Don't kill this journalist** like you did the last one." Those were instructions from one Ekoi employee to the other. I had just ridden up Col de Testanier with Ludovic Miel, an in-house editor at the French cycling gear company. We had started at Ekoi's headquarters in Fréjus and headed northeast toward the Mediterranean Sea. Testanier is a 5.4-km-long climb at an average gradient of 4.6 per cent that last appeared in the Tour des Alpes Maritimes et du Var in 2023. Miel was in fact taking it easy on me up the col. It was at the top of the climb that we met up with Maksymilian Gadomski, who, instead of tending to his duties as an export manager, was photographing the ride. Gadomski remembered another cycling journalist who nearly ran into trouble trying to follow Miel on a descent. Miel smiled, half shrugged, and then bombed downward.

It wasn't on the roads that I nearly ate it. Close to Théoule-sur-Mer, Miel and I stopped at an observation platform with a view of Cannes and Monaco in the distance. I came down some stairs and as my shoes with Look Keo cleats touched the wet, linoleum-like surface of the platform, I slipped. Luckily, I caught myself in time. Miel didn't lose traction at all. After I checked out the bottoms of his shoes, I could see why. He was set up for PW8 pedals.



The PW8 had made a splash three months before. The platforms were on the bikes of a few riders of the Nice Métropole Côte d'Azur team at Etoile de Bessèges. A few hours before the start of the race's second stage, those riders were told that they couldn't use their PW8s because they hadn't been approved by the UCI. The riders had to scramble for new equipment, which included shoes because the product uses a cleat system that doesn't resemble the three-bolt one of Shimano and Look cleats.

Miel, like the riders of Nice Métropole, had been testing PW8s. In fact, by May 2024, after about a year of using the pedals, he had put 15,000 km on them. Well,

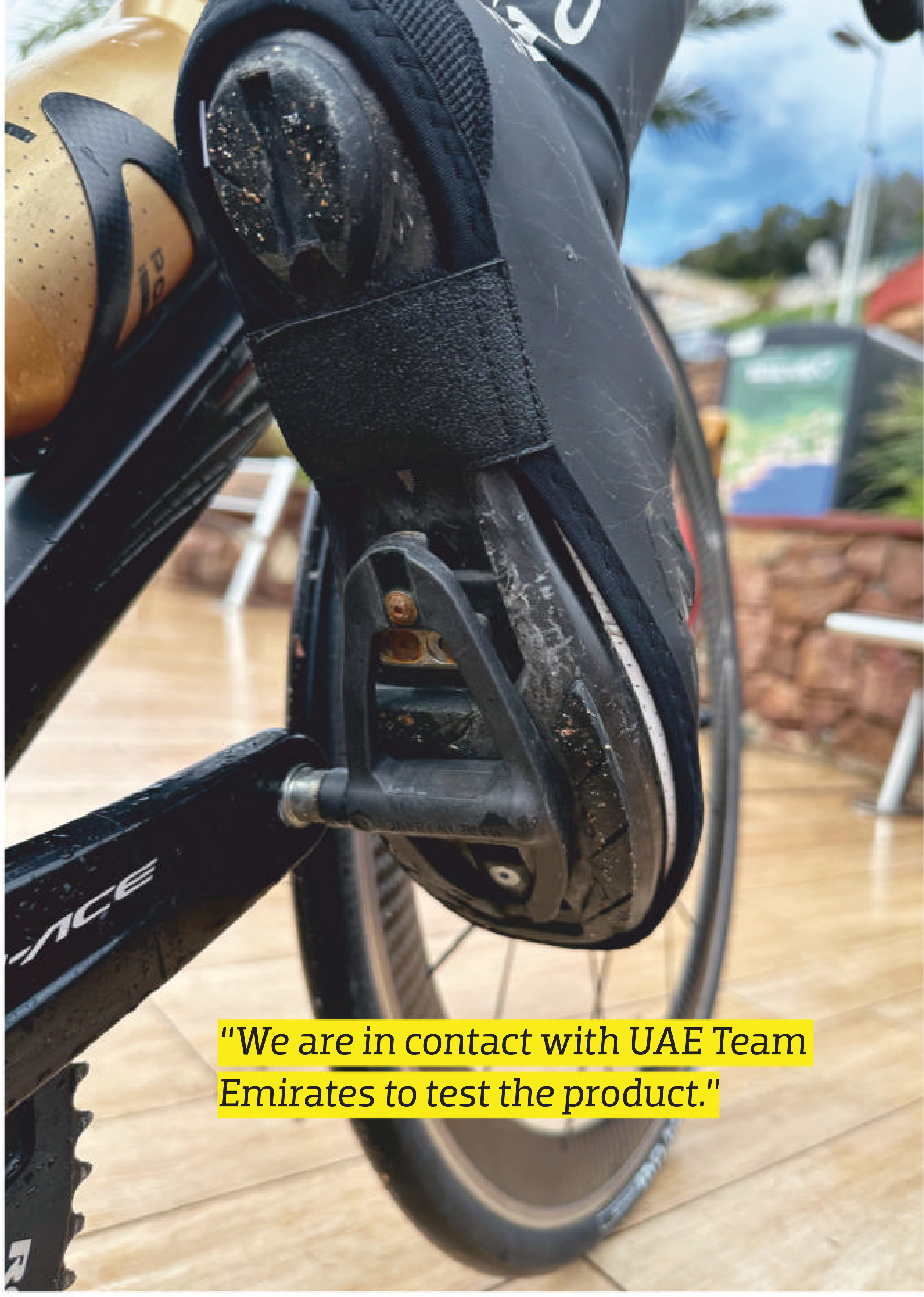
Photos: Ekoi, Matthew Pioro

15,069.08 km once we'd arrived back at Ekoi HQ. There I met with company president Jean-Christophe Rattel. He told me the epilogue of the Etoile de Bessèges pedal kerfuffle. The riders and the team, said Rattel, hadn't realized that the platforms still had to be approved. About a week after the race, they were cleared for competition. "Now, we are in contact with UAE Team Emirates to test the product," he said before revealing that Ineos-Grenadiers was keen to try out the PW8, too.

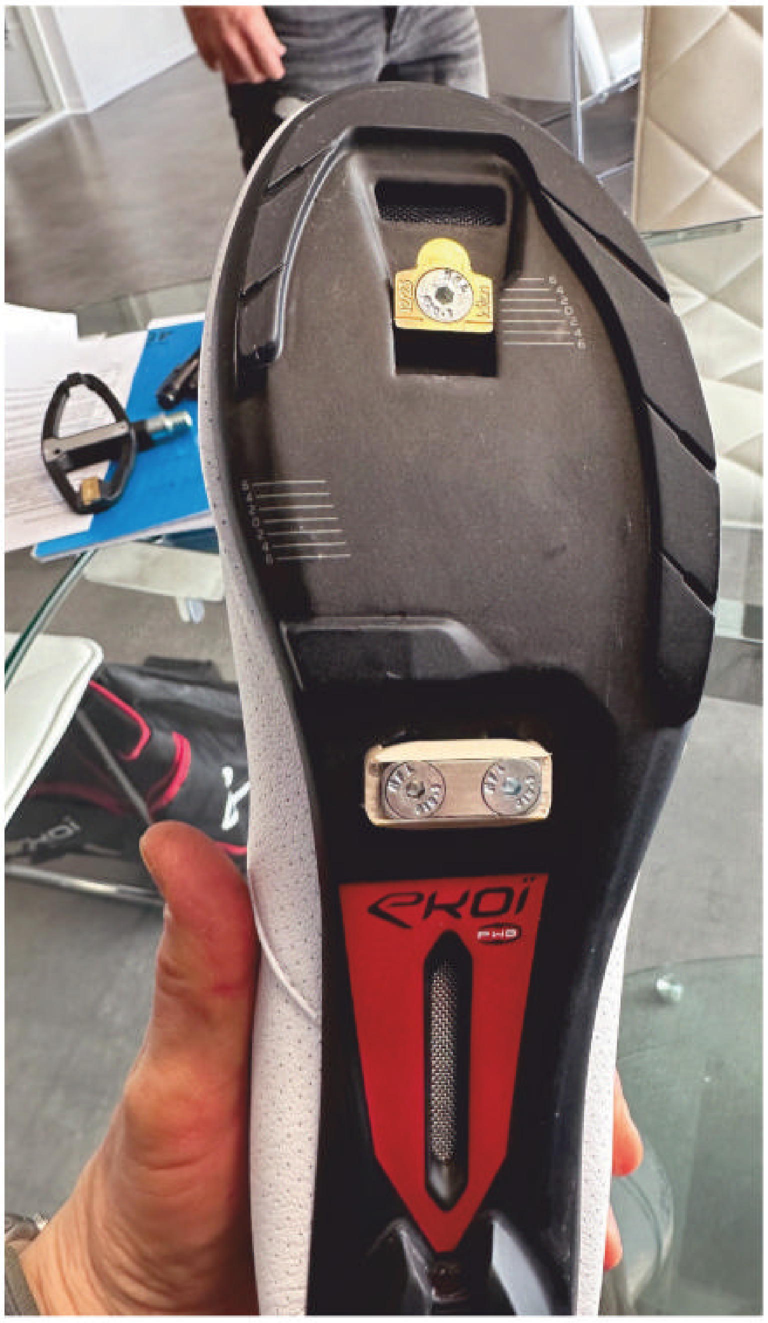
The new pedals were developed by Pascal Nobile, who had previously worked on pedals and ski bindings. He approached Rattel with the design. The Ekoi founder bought the patent and invested in its development, which took roughly two years. "It's not profitable," Rattel said. "But we want to bring something new and innovative to the market."

Rattel then introduced me to Luca Viano, an engineer at Ekoi who could speak to the performance benefits of the platforms. The 8 in the name is for the number of watts the company says a rider will save with the new components. "The distance between the spindle and the ball of the foot is much reduced compared with traditional pedals," Viano said. "So you have a more round, efficient pedal stroke rather than an elliptical one."

Viano said the company had tests that showed the pedals were more aerodynamic than other models available. I had seen their increased traction in action first hand. The PW8 have bigger platforms than Shimano SPD-SL or Look Keo, which Viana says is another plus. "Being bigger means that you have less pressure on a single point, which increases comfort," he said. "You might even be able to reduce the stiffness of a shoe's outsole. Nowadays, you need very stiff outsoles to reduce flex because you have to push on small platforms. But with a large platform, soles could be softer and more comfortable, but you'd have the same performance because of the support over the larger surface."



"We are in contact with UAE Team Emirates to test the product."



Photos: Matthew Pioro

On the topic of shoes, adopters of the PW8 would have to get new shoes for the pedal's specific retention system. There are no plans for an adapter for three-bolt shoes as it would negate many of the new component's performance gains. Rattel pointed out that the pedals do not have Ekoi's name on them, which he hoped will encourage other shoemakers to get on board. He said that at the time, one other brand was interested in designing compatible shoes, but it was too early to name it.

I was intrigued by the new pedals. While the company has many big claims for the product that I'm approaching with caution, I also feel Rattel and his staff are onto something. Look at the gravel space, for example. When Shimano launched its new GRX component line this past May, it paired its Deore XT pedals with the groupset. These are the platforms that cross country and cyclocross racers have been using for years, but I do feel they're not the best for mixed-surface riding. Often, pro gravel riders are opting for the road-focused pedals for comfort, the wide connection and perceived efficiency. Of course, if they put their feet down in sticky mud, they could slip and have a heckuva time clipping back in.

Unfortunately, I left Ekoi without my own pair of pedals to test. My name is on the list, however. They are scheduled to hit the market in February, about a year after they "starred" at Etoile de Bessèges. I'm hoping to be one of the first riders to do extended testing of the PW8 in the snow.

All the Best Presents for Riders Big and Small

From cool stocking stuffers to extravagant gear

Every year, we at *Canadian Cycling Magazine* are here to help with our gift guide. It's made up of items we'd give, and really like to receive, too. So no matter who's on your list this season—MTBer, gravel rider, commuter, roadie or grom—there's something they're sure to love, right here.

GEAR

2024 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

It's the little touches that count. FSA **polycarbonate headset spacers** (*fsaproshop.com*) liven up a bike around the stem. They are available in nine colours and in 10-mm ($18, pack of 10) and 5-mm ($16, pack of 10) sizes. Truly some prime bike bling.

Designed in Whistler, the 6" Dissent Labs **Supercrew Ultra MTN merino socks** ($35, *dissentlabs.com*) offer excellent breathability and comfort.

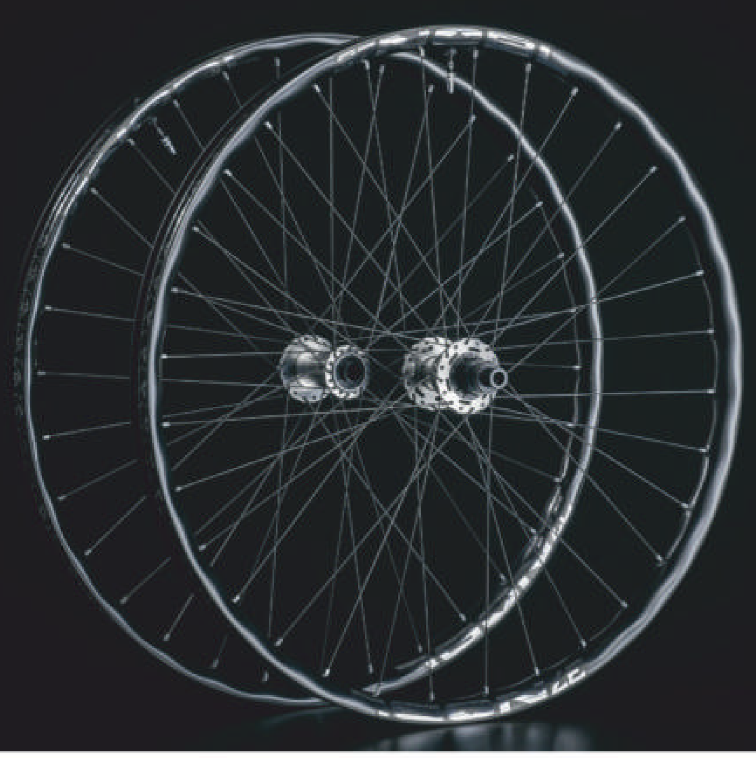
The Shimano **GF400 flat-pedal shoes** ($120, *ride.shimano.com*) sport the Ultread GF outsole. It's made with a rubber compound that gives a rider excellent pedal-feel. The hexagonal tread pattern ensures an interlocking connection with pins. The denim-like fabric of the upper looks great and protects against whatever kicks up from the trail.

Photos: Matt Stetson

FSA
CHROMAG
SCARAB

The Chromag **Scarab pedals** ($190, *chromagbikes.com*) are fine all-round platforms for the trails. They're thin, lightweight (430 g) and wicked-looking with their anodized aluminum. Available colours include black, blue, gold, purple, red and silver. Each pedal has 20 adjustable-height pins.

VéloColour is an eco-conscious outfit. After it acquired a pile of decommissioned life-vests for airplanes, it made musettes, of course. The VéloColour **ReMusette** ($45, *velocolour.com*) is a creative bit of repurposing. The material of the life-vest is water-resistant. Also, the old webbing was converted into the shoulder strap of the new bag.



Spoil a rider with the gift of custom wheels. Nobl **wheels** ($1,545–$3,254, *noblwheels.com*), based in Cumberland, B.C., builds carbon wheels for XC, trail, enduro, ebikes, gravel and road. When you're looking into custom hoops, it's best to know not only their intended use, but also the make, model and year of the bike. Working with that information, the folks at Nobl will be keen to help out.

DURA
200ft
3s Avg. Power
Speed
234
19.3
152.5
23:46

The launch of the Coros **Dura** ($399, *coros.com*) in mid-2024 marked the entry of a new player in the bike-computer space. The head unit has all the top features: navigation, touch screen, solar charging and trainer connectivity. The company says the Dura's battery life is a whopping 120 hours.

The Trek **Carback radar and rear bike light** ($265, *trekbikes.com*) gives a rider a massive boost in safety out on the roads. It detects oncoming vehicles from as far away as 240 m and sends an alert to a head unit. It also has four flash modes that can increase visibility to 2 km.

Jingle bells, indeed. The Trek **BellBeats digital bell and speaker** ($135, *trekbikes.com*) offers a few sounds to a rider that can signal urgency or act as lighthearted alerts. The unit can also stream music, podcasts or navigation prompts from a phone. There's six hours of runtime for a nicely epic playlist.

At 2,800 lumens, the Gloworm **XS light set** ($464, *glowormlites.co.nz*) is a crazy bright gift idea. It has multiple beam levels and flash modes. The XS runs for three hours at its maximum brightness. It can sit on the handlebars, close to its wireless remote, or on a helmet to cast a glow on the trail ahead.

Oh, our sport is full of electronic gizmos. It can be hard to keep them all charged, let alone organized. The Trek **CHRGtime charging station** ($165, *trekbikes.com*) can help cut the clutter and get juice to six devices via three USB-C and three USB-micro cords.

Photos: Matt Stetson

The Scott **Roxter 24 bike** ($670, *scott-sports.com*) is for a grom who's ready to tackle the trails. The 8-speed, 11–34 tooth cassette provides a nice range of gears, while the 24 x 2.6 tires offer a good amount of squish and traction.

KENDA
KENDA
SCOTT

Get the little one riding with the Trek **Precaliber 16 bike** ($390, *trekbikes.com*). The training wheels will build confidence. When it's time to take them off, you can remove them by hand, no tools required. If the kid is still a bit unsteady, or you're not ready to let go, there's a handle under the saddle.

For serious shred girls, there's the Liv **Faith 24 bike** ($2,999, *liv-cycling.com*). The full-suspension rig has a 140-mm-travel fork and 130-mm-travel shock. It rolls on a 24 x 2.4 Maxxis Minion DHF front tire and 24 x 2.3 Minion DHR II rear. A Giant Contact Switch AT Lite dropper post gets the saddle out of the way before a descent. Full send!

MAXXIS
MAXXIS
CREST
Faith

RIDE BIKES
HAVE FUN
FEEL GOOD

The Ekoi **bracelet** ($35, *ekoi.com*) shows the wearer's strong *link* with cycling. Available in five colours.

blivet
BALANCING THE ILLUSION
PUKEK

TUDOR
GENEVE
CHRONOMETER OFFICIALLY CERTIFIED

Rapha celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2024. To commemorate that milestone, the company has released **Rapha: The Extra Mile** ($97 hardcover, $62 softcover, *rapha.cc*). It's edited by *Rouleur* founder Guy Andrews and charts the rise of the influential brand through interviews and photos, all gorgeously designed, naturally.

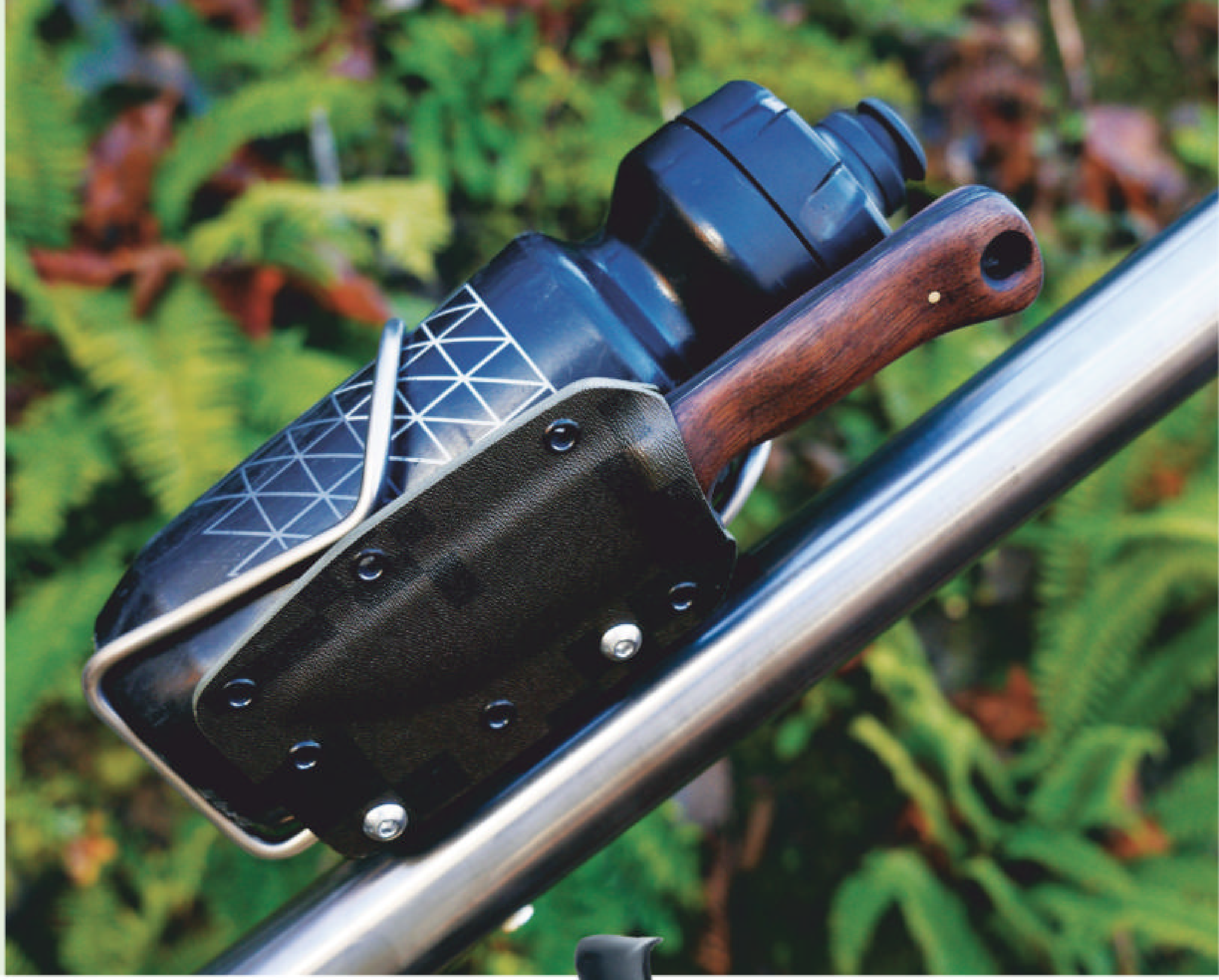
Quebec City's Blivet knows about cold. It's behind all kinds of gear to keep a rider warm on a winter fat bike ride. The Blivet **Pukek gloves** ($169, *blivetsports.com*) with their trigger-finger design, are made with goat leather, windproof and water-repellent polyester, PrimaLoft insulation and a soft recycled fleece inner liner.

Rapha
VOUS ÊTES ASSASS

The Tudor **Pelagos FXD Chrono Cycling Edition watch** ($6,570, *tudorwatch.com*) lives up to its name with its carbon case and tachymeter for gauging speed. In 2025, look for this watch around Julian Alaphilppe's wrist as he rides with his new team, Tudor Pro Cycling.

Photos: Matt Stetson

Jesse Hildebrandt of Nanaimo, B.C., is behind everything at Wildwood Cycles, including the Wildwood Cycles **Islander knife** ($218, *wildwoodcycles.ca*). It's an elegant tool for bikepacking trips deep into the woods. The blade is made from 4130 steel that's heat treated and tempered twice. It comes with a sheath that works with a bike's bottle-cage bolts. There's also a bracket for attaching the knife next to a bottle cage.



PODIUM
CAMELBAK

Vision
Metron

The Vision **Metron high-grip carbon bottle cage** ($95, *fsaproshop.com*) holds a water bottle securely, keeping it from ejecting on a rough, gravel road. The component weighs a feathery 54 g.

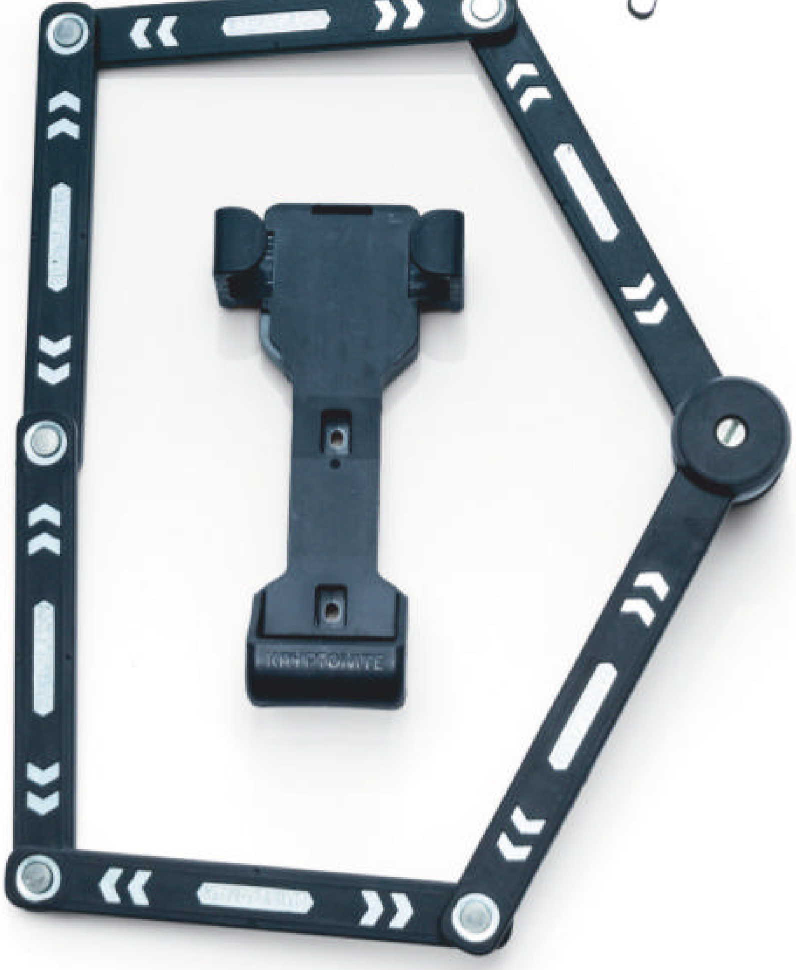
The 650-ml Camelbak **Podium water bottle** ($50, *ogc.ca*) keeps water cold with its vacuum-insulated stainless-steel walls. To prevent things from getting funky, the cap can be disassembled for cleaning. Expect this bottle to last.

The Elite **Eroica Alu bottle** ($50 *elite-it.com*) pairs nicely with a lugged steel-frame bike.

ELITE
L'Eroica

The Buzz Rack **E-Scorpion H2 hitch rack** ($650, *damourbicycle.com*) can carry two mountain or ebikes with tires as wide as 4". It will hold small bikes securely, too. Fully loaded, the E-Scorpion tilts out of the way when it's necessary to grab something from the trunk.

The Corsino **Sally top-tube bag** ($40, *corsinosport.com*), which is designed in Canada, keeps ride essentials easily at hand. The 1.2 l case is waterproof and is secured in place via three hook-and-loop straps. It can fit at least four energy bars.



The Kryptonite **610 S folding lock** ($175, *kryptonitelock.com*) secures a bike with its 5-mm hardened-steel links. The click-tight bracket holds the lock well when it's not in use. The 610 S is ebike-approved.

A bikepacker will appreciate the versatility of the Osprey **Escapist wedge bag** ($80, *osprey.com*). It can strap to the frame behind the head tube or toward the back of the top tube at the seat tube—whatever works best for the bike. Zippers on each side of the bag let a rider access its 2 l of storage.

Photos: Matt Stetson

VéloCOLOUR

Designed and made in Toronto, the VéloColour **cap** ($48, *velocolour.com*) is 74 per cent cotton and 24 per cent hemp. It comes in three patterns. This one is the black geometric special. Two sizes are available: small/medium and medium/large. Since each casquette is handmade, the fit can vary. Exchanges are a snap. You can even get a custom size sewn up.

The Apis **Mapei cap** ($25, *logicasport.com*) is for the rider who's into the good old days of cycling. Remember, this was the team that swept the 1996 Paris-Roubaix podium. There are other classic team casquettes available as well, including Brooklyn, Mercatone Uno, Z and La Vie Claire.

True to its name, the high-quality Unior **Euro 17 multi-tool** ($72, *ogc.ca*) has 17 instruments that will make road- or trail-side fixes a snap. Highlights include a Schrader and Presta valve-core tool, a chain tool and a spoke key for 3.3-mm and 3.45-mm spoke nipples, as well as 3.3-mm star-shaped ones.

PRO H2x50
PRO PH2x50
PRO T10x50
PRO SL4x50

It's the smallest bolts that are the trickiest. They're too easy to round out. This set of four PRO **screwdrivers** ($36, *pro-bikegear.com*) allows for the right amount of control when taking on tiny fasteners. They're tools that just twist right.

With the Feedback **Range click torque wrench** ($170, *feedbacksports.com*) every home mechanic can dial in the proper Newton metres with ease. The anodized aluminum body looks sharp. Thirteen bits (three extended bits not shown) cover pretty much every fastener found on a bike.

T30
T25
T10
8
6
5
4
3
2.5
2
FEEDBACK SPORTS
Nm

GIANT
OPTICS

The polarized lens of the Giant **Helio sunglasses** ($110, *giant-bicycles.com*) cuts the glare of the sun during big rides. In contrast, the Liv **Agos sunglasses** ($90, *liv-cycling.com*) uses VividVis lens technology, which enhances the contrast between colours, sharpening the view of the road or trail ahead. Both come with clear lenses for low-light conditions.

The NamedSport **HydraFit drink mix and water bottle** ($27, *unoimports.com*) will keep a rider properly fuelled. The 400 g of mix contains magnesium and potassium to help working muscles. It's vegan-friendly and halal-certified.

NAMEDSPORT®
SUPERFOOD
WHOLE QUALITY
BRAND OF ITALY
NAMEDSPORT®
HYPOTONIC DRINK
HydraFit
MINERALS, MALTODEXTRIN AND 9 VITAMINS
+ MAGNESIUM + POTASSIUM
400g x 20
red orange flavour
BEFORE
DURING
AFTER

PINARELLO
TREVISO

The sharp design of Pinarello **Heritage logo T-shirt** ($35, *unoimports.com*) is on par with the company's bikes. Its soft organic cotton fabric is just the thing to wear after a hard ride.

Photos: Matt Stetson

SQUID × ASS SAVERS® WIN WING
Rab
Rab

While it may be somewhat crass to give a gift with "ass" in the name, any rider who faces foul weather will see the Ass Saver **Win Wing 2 gravel fender** ($40, *ass-savers.com*) as a very thoughtful present that keeps a soggy chamois at bay. This easy-to-attach mudguard affixes to a bike's seatstays. It works with tires as wide as 60 mm.

Both the Rab **Filament print beanie** ($30, *rab.equipment*) and **Filament neck tube** ($20) are made mostly with recycled Thermic fleece. They have areas of high and low loft for warmth and minimal bulk. (And for the record, it's Rab that calls the item that sits under a helmet a beanie, but it's a toque. We all know that, eh?)

You know the old saying: "Campagnolo wears in; it doesn't wear out." Well, the soft, comfortable Campagnolo **hoodie** ($165, *campagnolo.com*) is something that should be worn inside and out and about.

CAMPAGNOLO
Campagnolo

At an event or even a chill spin with friends, a rider doesn't want to be faffing about, searching for misplaced arm warmers or the perfect gloves for the day's weather. The Castelli **Race rain bag** ($90, *castelli-cycling.com*) wins at organization. In the main compartment, mesh pockets arrange equipment nicely. The bottom zippered space is just the place to stash stinky shoes.

A bike commuter will love the Deuter **Xberg 25 pannier and backpack** ($260, *roirecreation.com*). The Xberg 25 converts quickly and easily from a bag that hangs from a rear rack to something that slides over the shoulder. It has an organizer for a laptop and documents in its main compartment. Its outer compartment is ideal for stashing a lock. For downpours, the bag comes with rain cover. The total carrying capacity is 25 l.

The Scott **Soldier Ghost knee guards** ($110, *scott-sports.com*) and **Soldier Ghost elbow protection** ($100) feature D3o Ghost pads. These pads are quite malleable but harden on impact to dissipate the forces of a bump. The high-tech D3o inserts are easily removable when it's time to throw the fabric sleeves in the wash.

Photos: Matt Stetson

A lid for the everyday rider—the Lazer **Tonic KinetiCore helmet** ($110, *lazersport.ca*) provides an excellent level of protection with its KinetiCore technology. The built-in blocks on the inside of the helmet crumple on impact to reduce the effects of rotational forces. Lazer's universal LED unit can attach to the back to boost visibility.

The Scott **Argo Plus Junior helmet** ($100, *scott-sports.com*) is a great lid for little shredders. It has a five-star rating from Virginia Tech, which tests helmets at its own facility. A MIPS layer provides added protection against rotational forces that can affect the brain in a crash.

MINT'N DRY
DRY LUBE · LUBRIFIANT SEC
MINT'N DRY
ALL CONDITIONS LUBE
TOUTES CONDITIONS
MINT'N DRY
WET LUBE · LUBRIFIANT WET

Grime begone. The Park Tool **CM-25 professional chain scrubber** ($200, *parktool.com*) is made with die-cast aluminum. The internal cartridges with brushes and sponges are replaceable, so this tool will not only prolong the life of a chain, but ultimately outlast it.

Yes, three types of chain lube are important to have on hand. A dry lube keeps a chain running smoothly and clean in most conditions. If there's a bit of moisture on the roads or trails or for daily commuting, all-conditions is the way to go. For really soggy, dirty or cold conditions (down to -25 C), the wet lube is just the stuff. They all come as part of the Mint'N Dry **ceramic bike lube trio** ($50, *mintndry.com*).

Otherworldly Bikepacking in Fjallabak

Volcanoes, high winds and tough gravel make for a challenging adventure

DESTINATION

ICELAND

by **Stephen Cheung**

The wind. Geez. Was my bike going to turn into a kite and blow away across this volcanic ridge? A 4.7-km climbing segment was going to take about three hours of pushing through the gale-force cross/headwind, if I was lucky.

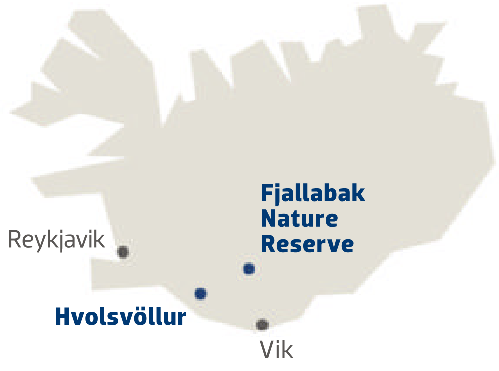
At this point, on Day 4 of our five-day adventure centred around the Fjallabak Nature Reserve, with gusts of nearly 100 km/h blasting us, temperatures in the single digits, and dark clouds intermittently bringing deluges of rain, Sean came over and, in his most friendly Kiwi accent, said, "Sunscreen?"

Such is the insanity of cycling in Iceland.

A few years ago, I had joined a group of friends planning a ride in Iceland in summer of 2020, but that obviously got cancelled. In the fall of 2023, when a different group started batting ideas around for an adventure, I threw Iceland into the hat and, like magma surfacing up through the volcanoes that created this mid-Atlantic island, the idea quickly bubbled up to the top of the list.

Sean and I, along with Dave, Jake and Chris, settled on the Iceland Fjallabak Track, designed by *bikepacking.com*. It features a combination of jaw-dropping scenery and rugged wilderness balanced with accessible mountain huts. At five days, it was also an ideal length—a long, but not too long, adventure. Sitting in the comfort of home beforehand, I found myself almost apologizing to friends that it was "only" 290 km total.

Cramming five bikes and all our kit inside a small shuttle van, we drove 90 minutes out of Reykjavik to the start town of Hvolsvöllur, surrounded by active volcanoes and home of the excellent LAVA Centre, a volcano museum. As we rode our bikes, the gravel and climbing snuck up on us gradually in terms of their technical challenges, until we were climbing and pushing our rigs under overcast skies along chunky surfaces. A long convoy of horses being herded right next to our trail, set against a background of mist-covered vibrant green mountains, was the first real sign that we were in a different world. The gravel descents were nice respites, but still required care as our bikes were loaded. Dave's water shoes and shoe covers were continually dislodging from his rear pannier



Photos: Stephen Cheung

rack. Not only did we have to avoid running over Dave's footwear, we picked it up, too.

As is typical of a first day, we stopped too often and faffed around too much. Eventually, we made the call to shorten our day to a backup mountain hut and campsite at Emstrur, set on a beautiful ridge surrounded by mountains. That night was our first exposure to the intensity of Icelandic wind with it testing our tents' integrity from every angle.

Icelanders are blunt and honest, characteristics that probably stem from surviving in such a challenging environment. Words don't get minced, softened or exaggerated for dramatic effect. If a river crossing is calf deep, they won't tell you that it's thigh deep. If you try to claim that the winds were 60 km/h, they'll immediately fact check you and say that the gusts were 50 km/h at most. At the same time, they'll wave you onwards and tell you that it'll be fine and good luck, no matter what you're about to embark upon. Search and rescue jeeps passed us multiple times with barely a nod of recognition.

Another necessary societal trait in terms of looking out for one another is being open and welcoming. As we slogged across a long river valley on Day 2, a four-by-four passed us to offer encouragement. The people in the vehicle, who were volunteer wardens, invited us to warm up at the mountain hut a few kilometres ahead where they worked. At the end of our 12.5-hour outing that same day, we arrived at the Hólaskjól camp, where Jake had made a booking. The manager greeted us with a hearty "Jake! My boys, you made it!" while her friend poured us shots of celebratory homemade brandy before we could set our bikes down.

The first night at Emstrur proved to be a warm-up for Day 4 from Landmannalaugar and its hot springs to a private hut at Dalakofinn. The first half of the 45 km fooled us with flat terrain and a strong tailwind. But then that turned into cross and headwinds the rest of the day, with no trees anywhere for respite. It felt like we were living U2's song "Running to Stand Still" just trying to keep our fully loaded bikes upright. Chris was my guardian angel, coming back multiple times to help me haul my bike up yet another hill. Thankfully, we had the Dalakofinn hut all to ourselves that night and dried out all of our gear and clothes. The owner, Gustav, recommended his private hot springs about 500 m from the hut, but with the horrible weather plus the need to cross a river to get there, we stayed indoors and enjoyed a second dinner instead.

We definitely took on some of the tough Icelandic grit as a team. During the final river crossing of Day 2, Sean dropped one of his cycling shoes. He had to ride the final three days with one shoe and one sandal, adding to the overall absurdity of our adventure. But really, short of a search and rescue evacuation, the only way out was onward. I think that level of toughness and perseverance was something that we all took away from Iceland.

Our final day was a dream ride despite the rain, with a mostly downhill profile and much lighter bikes after leaving most of our remaining food at Dalakofinn. Only two flats because of Jake enjoying himself too much could

Emstrur–Botnar Hut

derail our fun. Iceland did have one last kick at us though, with possibly the roughest gravel of the whole trip on the final 10 km before pavement and Hvolsvöllur—nothing that an incredible pizza while awaiting our shuttle couldn't fix.

Raw and immense—Iceland really is another world. A cycling adventure there is not for those looking for an easy ride, but it will absolutely change you.

Details

How to get there

Icelandair offers direct flights to Keflavik Airport from Vancouver, Toronto and Halifax. Air Canada and WestJet also offer flights from major centres. Airport shuttles run regularly to Reykjavik and will accept bike boxes and bags. If you are set for adventure right out of the (airport) gate, just outside the departure exit

Photos: Stephen Cheung

> "I think that level of toughness and perseverance was something that we all took away from Iceland."

is the Bike Pit, a building complete with stands and tools where you can assemble your bike, or pack it up later. There's no place to store your bike box or luggage though.

What to do off the bike

We mainly used Reykjavik as a base for sightseeing after our trip. To pamper yourself, go to the Blue Lagoon thermal baths (*bluelagoon.com*) about an hour's drive from the capital. The Blue Lagoon spa is likely Iceland's most popular tourist attraction, and was a nice indulgence after our ride. Another popular day trip by car or organized tour is the Golden Circle route that includes the original Geysir, where we get the word "geyser," the stunning Gulfoss waterfall and a drive or hike through Thingvellir National Park. Often, tours also stop at the Kerid volcanic crater. On the south coast near Vik are also glacier hikes.

Don't get fooled by the Ring Road

When you survey a map of Iceland, don't fall into the trap of thinking that riding the ring road encircling the island would make for a great cycling tour. Don't do it. Narrow single-lane roads with no shoulders, gusting winds and a lot of cars and trucks make for a terrifying and ultimately unrewarding ride.

What bike to bring

Four of us brought gravel bikes, while Sean rented a mountain bike. A hardtail with low gears allowed him to ride up more of the steep grades, but the upright posture and minimal position changes were tough with the wind. Jake and I had 700c wheels with 40–42 mm tires. We had to ride carefully and slowly through the chunkier gravel. Chris and Dave ran 650b wheels with 46–48 mm tires. Ultimately, on this trip, you won't ever regret the widest tires your bike can fit.

Q&A

Micayla Gatto

The freerider and her sport continue to progress

by **Matthew Pioro**

This past summer, around the time Red Bull Rampage released the long list of riders for its first women's edition of the freeride event, Micayla Gatto took some time to look back at the changes she'd seen throughout her career. She raced downhill at the elite level in the 2000s. After a bad crash in 2014, she stepped away from competition. For Gatto's next phase, she mixed her creative and artistic abilities with mountain biking. In 2017, she and her team won Crankworx Dirt Diaries with "Ferda Girls," a parody music video based on Kendrick Lamar's "Humble." Gatto's song is entertaining as it also criticizes sexism and gender inequalities in mountain biking.

In 2023, Gatto joined the YT Mob. The bike brand, as well as Gatto's other sponsors, have allowed her to keep riding and to pursue more on-bike goals. In August, Gatto was on the alternates list for Rampage. Robin Goomes won the event in October, while Canucks Georgia Astle and Casey Brown rounded out the podium. Although Gatto didn't get a call-up, she was at the cliffs in Utah supporting her freeride friends.

When the lineup for the first women's Red Bull Rampage was released, you were on the alternates list. How did you feel about that?

I was ecstatic. Rewinding back a little bit, I raced downhill World Cups for so long. I crashed, got a head injury and had to stop racing. I switched to making videos and media content. My sponsor at the time, Diamondback, actually didn't make a downhill bike. So for the years that I was on Diamondback, I wasn't really able to ride any downhill and focused more on adventure riding, storytelling and content creation.

In 2023, I switched to YT. So, to get on that alternate list after only being back on a downhill bike consistently the past few years, I'm super proud. I think it is recognition and a little carrot dangling in front of me that I need to keep me motivated. Rampage is totally a tangible goal.

In 2024, not only did Rampage add the women's category, but the Freeride Mountain Bike Association developed a women's slopestyle world championships. Has the work you've done throughout the years contributed to these developments in women's mountain biking?

That's hard to answer. I've always just done what I loved. I've never really seen it as an option to do anything else. I love trying to improve the climate of women in sport whenever I can. I didn't make a dime when I was racing World Cups for nine years. I worked three jobs. Now, we see a huge shift. The younger girls coming up are getting full sponsorships, media budgets and things like that.

The change is undeniable. How much have I made an impact? I don't know. I mean, I've had a couple of people name their babies after me. So I've got to be doing something right.

But I think it's taken Vero Sandler, Casey Brown, Katie Holden, Katrina Strand, Claire Buchar, Rachel Atherton—it's taken all of us women constantly fighting for what we feel we deserve and constantly working to better ourselves in the sport as a collective whole to make the difference that we see today.

Close to seven years ago, you released "Ferda Girls." That video won Crankworx Dirt Diaries and became a viral sensation. How has your relationship with that work changed in the past seven years?

The video was the first time I really expressed my frustrations with being a female in the sport. I think it was the first time any female had really expressed their frustrations in a sort of palatable and comedic way for the general public. So, I'm always going to be proud of it. But there are times I wish I could redo it, do a better job. That's just the perfectionist in me.

I do remember that when it was released, I wasn't initially super proud. I was scared about putting myself out there because no woman had really done that in that kind of way. Or the women who had spoken out about these issues faced a lot of backlash. Women voicing their opinions didn't seem to be respected.

It was a bit of a catalyst. I think from that point onwards, things really took off. How much was the video responsible for that? I don't know, but I think there is sort of a correlation.

Someone had called it my life's greatest work. I remember thinking, if my life's greatest work is dancing around in Spandex in a parody music video, that is a sad existence. But now, seven years later, looking back, I'm like, you know what, I think maybe that might be my life's greatest work. ©

STATS

Lives	Squamish
Born	Aug. 21, 1988
Bikes	YT Tues

"I've had a couple of people name their babies after me. So I've got to be doing something right."

Photo: Chris Wellhausen/YT

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